CORE RULEBOOK

HUNTER

THE RECKONING

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The hair always stands up on the back of my neck when the sun goes down, any time I can see it happening. It's when trouble happens.

Sure, it sounds screwy. Too much media. Inability to distinguish fantasy from reality. People like to say shit like that because it makes them feel like they're better than you. I think it also makes them uncomfortable to admit there's things out there that they're not prepared for.

I know, believe me. I used to have that same attitude. The night is for going downtown and having a few drinks, dancing, laughing with friends.

I can't remember the last time I danced or laughed. I drink all the time now, and I'm downtown every night, but for different reasons. None of my friends talk to me anymore. Look, here's my messages. Inbox zero, ha ha. Ugh.

I remember the night it happened, a bunch of us were screwing around, had gone day-drinking, and everyone was fired up enough that nobody wanted to go home. So we bounced from place to place and eventually ended up at that one hotel in the round building, about six blocks from the highway entrance. Hotel bars always have this attitude of "sure, why not?" because they're never anyone's actual local.

There was a wedding reception happening, mostly winding down. We were drunk enough to crash it, and they were drunk enough not to care. I ended up going upstairs with one of the women for just one more, and to see where it took us. Sonali, her name was.

I remember the flickering lights when we got out of the elevator. She said it had been like that all weekend, no big deal. Then we walked past this room on the way to hers, and the door was upside down. Only it wasn't a door, it was like someone had drawn a door on the wall and drawn it upside down.

I pointed at it — I thought I was maybe drunker than I had been feeling, but Sonali saw it, too, and said, "I don't remember that being there. Do you think it's art?" It wasn't art. It wasn't that kind of hotel.

Then that weird, upside-down drawn-on hotel door opened, somehow, like the space between where the door was drawn and whatever the room inside was opened up.

I don't know what happened next. A couple hours had passed, and I didn't know where Sonali had gone. I kind of came to my senses back in the closed hotel bar, but the staff were agitated and I was obviously not supposed to be there. Maybe "came to my senses" is the wrong way to say it. I felt like I was coming up for air after being underwater.

I got a ride home and threw up, less from being drunk and more from the strangeness of it all. It had made me feel, I don't know, like I was the one who was upside-down or inside out or something.

That was the scariest part. If it was just a confrontation with some asshole, I would maybe have punched him or maybe... I don't know. But it all made

me feel powerless, like it was obviously wrong, and it felt dangerous, but what could I say or do about it? What, I'm going to call the hotel and say, "A weird, hand-drawn door on your ninth floor scared me?"

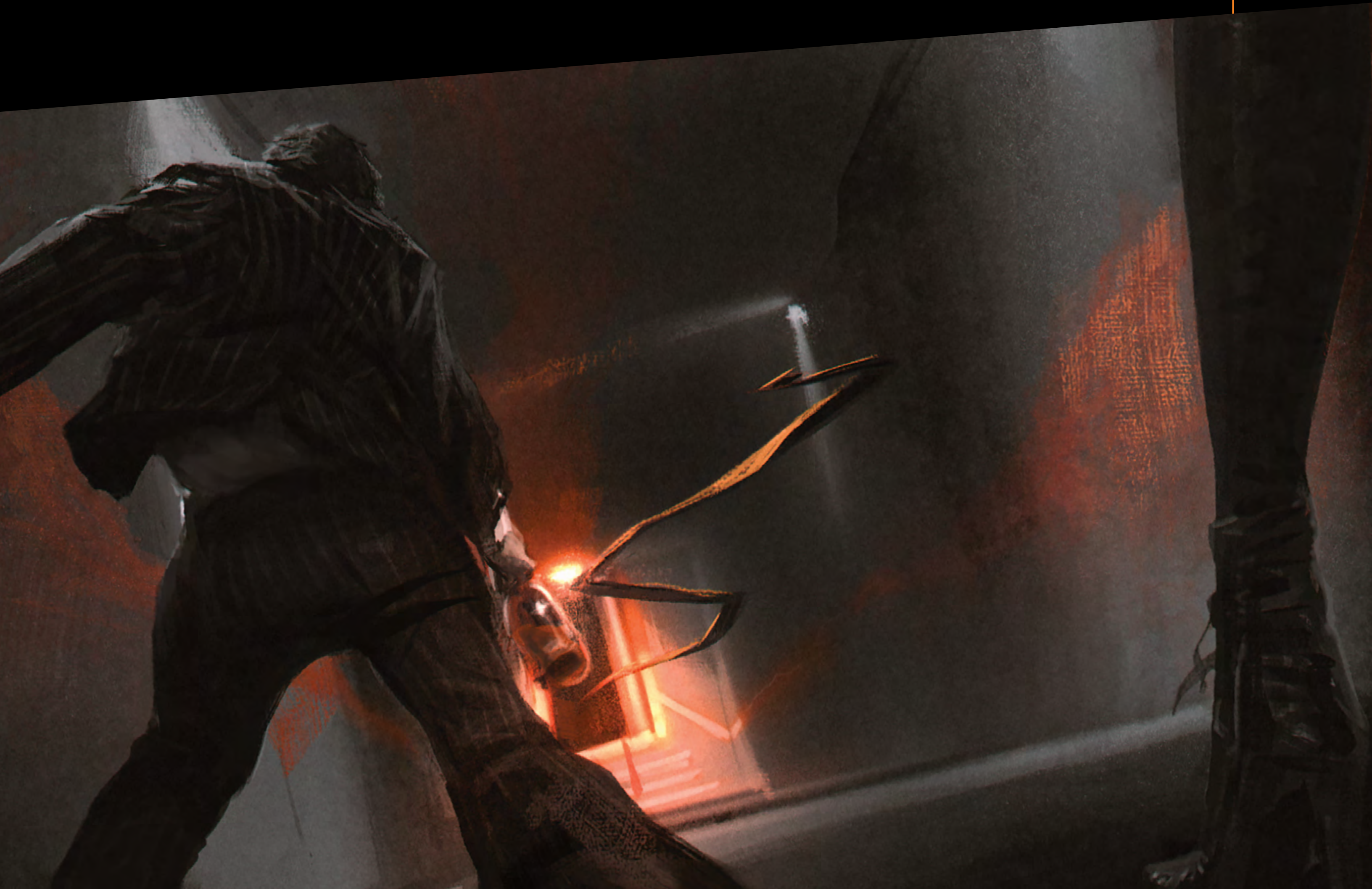
That was my first time. I've seen weird shit like that maybe half a dozen times since, and I go out looking for it every night. My roommate moved out. Said I was losing it and that it made him anxious. So now I have to eat that cost.

I'm not good at finding them, and I'm not good at doing anything about them... yet. I'm just figuring things out right now, you know? All I've figured out is that these... these holes in the world happen when it's dark outside, so when I see it get dark, it means I need to... to pay attention. I saw another near on the loading dock of the newspaper building, this strange rectangle with a number on it that I thought was just a concrete wall, but it opened up and I blacked out again. And near the women's shelter, I saw it move but I chickened out before it opened, if it ever did.

But it feels like I'm onto something, like I saw something I wasn't supposed to, and now I just can't stop looking around me because it might happen again, and I might miss it.

And I feel like I have to do something about it, but I don't know what. I don't know what.

Wait, you've seen these doors, too?



INTRODUCTION

Humanity clings to a comfortable illusion that the world belongs to mankind, that they lead lives of free-willed individuality, completely unaware that they occupy a world of grim mysteries inhabited by monsters. Those savvy to the secrets of the World of Darkness know the truth, however: that timeless blood-drinkers, ravening shapeshifters, restless ghosts, and even more harrowing things haunt the night.

► The adjunct professor who has observed the inordinately long tenure of the school's most "eccentric" emeritus.

► The exhausted new mother at her wits' end, who keeps seeing something outside the window and stands vigil over the bassinet, fearful of what happens when she finally collapses.

► The detective who somehow survives the mother of all beatdowns by — what the fuck *was* that? — reopening a case that had gone cold two decades ago.

► The newly arrived immigrant who witnesses brazen human trafficking by the dockside, paid for by a pair of individuals who keep flickering in and out of physical solidity.

All of these and more become capital-H Hunters.

Hunters are among those who have seen past the veil of secrecy and know the world for what it is — a bauble in the claws of monsters. Hunters fight back against the threat because they have glimpsed the truth and resolved to do something about it.

A Call to Action

Some among the human throng find the mettle to stand against the creatures of the night. **Hunter: The Reckoning** is a storytelling game about those people and the desperate measures they employ to emancipate themselves from the evils of the supernatural.

It's a dangerous path, but it's a righteous path. The Hunters of **Hunter: The Reckoning** are driven — personally and extremely — to pursue the monstrous creatures that prowl the night. The Hunter's calling is to prevent monsters from harming the world.

The player's call to action is prompted by evocative utterances such as "Defy the darkness," "No one's prey," and "Reclaim the night." The game's sobriquet itself, the Reckoning, indicates an urgency, a desire to challenge the way things are and escape the clutches of the supernatural — and to exact retribution. The time for monsters to act without consequence is over because *you're going to do something about it.*

Hunters form their own cells with other Hunters, for protection and advantage in numbers... hopefully. Think of cells as Hunter "start-ups." The players' characters bring specialized Edges into their own unique cells, which are likely cosmopolitan in makeup, with Hunters from a variety of ideologies, known as creeds. Creeds shape how the Hunter approaches their supernatural quarry, from the outlook they suppose to the tools they provide. As well, they provide a social component to what might otherwise be a bleak and lonely road. If nothing else, one can look to others of one's creed for a common take on the monster-infested world and how and why to effect change.

Desperate Measures

One risk of being a Hunter is the consuming nature of the Hunt, of perseverance in the face of not just adversity but danger. Drive enables the Hunter to push themselves beyond the limits of those without it, but Drive also tempts the Hunter to keep going. The more they learn, the closer they're pulled into the proximity of the very things they pursue, even when the wisest course is to withdraw and reconsider the plan.

Thus can Drive instantiate its own cycle of hunt and consequence, as the Hunters delve into a threat, suffering the outcomes of their actions, which establishes the urgency to pursue the subsequent threat, and so on, until it reaches its climax.

The counterpart of Drive is Desperation, the intense urgency that prompts cells of Hunters to *do something now*, before it's too late! Players always choose when to engage their Hunter's Drive (because there's risk involved), but Desperation grows as the threat mounts in any number of ways.

For more on these game systems, see p. 127.

Distinguishing Hunters

The player-protagonists of **Hunter: The Reckoning** are philosophically and mechanically different from organized hunter antagonists like the FBI's Special Affairs Division and the Society of St. Leopold by dint of their Drives: Other hunters take orders, but Hunter: The Reckoning characters make their own way following their Drives.

As well, Hunters generally consider the more formal orgs to be ethically compromised or corrupt. Many of the orgs have ulterior motives beyond the actual Hunt. At best, Hunters might take a tip or a contract from an org knowing that the org has an agenda behind the cooperation. At worst, the orgs are actively working against the Hunters, perhaps using them to reveal unknown supernatural threats, or even using the Hunt as an opportunity to eliminate what they see as rogue elements.

That's important: The players' characters have Drives, creeds, and Edges. The vast majority of hunters in the orgs (and even many lone hunters) themselves do not.

The ultimate Hunter intention in this regard is to *get shit done*. Unburdened by the ethically compromised agendas of the orgs, Hunter cells have the advantage of operating with an integrity and independence that the larger and more structured orgs can't.

That means the orgs themselves often function as antagonists in **Hunter**'s World of Darkness, or as entities that otherwise illustrate a number of **Hunter** themes. For example, Hunters might have contacts in the orgs who feed them information here and there, but it's just as likely that they're using the Hunters as bait to flush out a nest of "unusual threats" they've been monitoring for three months.

Storytelling Games and Roleplaying

Storytelling began with humanity, as language transformed us from fire-using apes to something else. Those stories, we tell ourselves, began around a fire as warnings of real or imagined dangers and temptations waiting in the darkness outside. Our stories changed from campfire warnings to epic poetry, plays, novels, and operas. They added new dangers and temptations, many of them now waiting inside us.

In the 20th century, stories moved out of human voices and minds into display and spectacle. Movies, comics, television, and the limitless reaches of digital entertainment still kept that flickering light in the middle, even as they carried our stories almost as far as our imagination could go. Almost.

Roleplaying games, as one of the newest storytelling art forms, complete the arc from those first firesides to the modern monitor glow. In roleplaying games, players tell or act out the stories for an audience of themselves, guided by the rules or logic of the game, but limited only by their imagination. If you've never played a roleplaying game, don't worry. It's as easy as playing house or bang-you're-dead were when you were a child, and as endlessly fascinating stories themselves.

Most importantly, and distinguishing them from traditional told-to-you, media, storytelling games are about making choices. A group of players and the Storyteller — the troupe — collectively tell a tale of secrets and consequences, monsters, and the mortals who oppose them.

The Storyteller

As a **Hunter: The Reckoning** player, you take on the persona and role of a character that you create, and you then pretend to be that character during the course of the story. One of the participants, the Storyteller, creates and guides the story. They build the setting and populate it with a cast of supporting characters. The Storyteller describes what happens in the world as a result of what the players say and do. It is the Storyteller who arbitrates the rules and springs horrifying new challenges into the game.

The Storyteller's primary duty is to make sure the other players have a good time. They do that by telling a good story. Unlike novelists or film directors, however, they don't simply tell the story from hook to climax. Storytellers create the setting and set the plot in motion — and then let the players live it out in the roles of the primary characters, defining the story outcomes and setting as they go. Storytellers maintain a careful balance between narration and adjudication, between entertainer and umpire, between story and game. Sometimes Storytellers set the scene or even describe the action, but mostly they decide what occurs in reaction to the words and actions of the characters, as fairly and impartially as they can.

The Players

Although the Storyteller plays the game and indeed portrays dozens or hundreds of characters, the term *player* refers to those participants at the table who assume the roles of the central characters in the story. As a player in **Hunter**, you create one main character and then roleplay them. You speak for them, you impel them to action; you decide what they desire in the world of the game and how they want to attain or accomplish it. The Storyteller tailors the story to those

desires; the players build characters who have a role in that story, and whose actions complete or transcend it.

Often after describing the actions you want to take, the Storyteller tells you to make a dice roll to see if you succeed in doing what you have illustrated with words. Your character's Traits, descriptions of their strengths and weaknesses, dictate how well your character can do certain things. Knowing your character's abilities, both natural and supernatural, gives you the tools to choose from in order to provide the best chance of succeeding.

Thus, a good player balances acting and strategy, considering their character's personality and desires along with their Traits. You employ your character's strengths and work around their weaknesses to achieve your goals, even as the world remains hostile and dangerous. Your character's actions help shape the world; as a player, you can also add ideas and elements to the story. The Storyteller incorporates them (or chooses not to) in order to foster the most dramatic, interesting, and challenging narrative possible at the table.

With its potential for intensity and intimacy, like all World of Darkness games, **Hunter** rewards player focus: on their own character, and on the dramas and desires of their fellow players' characters. Much of the game's mystery and flavor is lost when players must compete for the Storyteller's (and each others') attention. The story likewise can become unfocused if it must share the spotlight among a large entourage of "main" characters. We find that **Hunter** plays most enjoyably with one Storyteller and a troupe of three to five players.

Play Aids

In the format we detail in this book, **Hunter** is designed to be played at a table, virtual tabletop, or emergent format like online chat servers. There is no board, but dice, pencil, and paper (or their virtual substitutes) require a table for proper use. Tables also provide a common focus for player attention. You need photocopies of the character sheets (at the end of the book or downloadable from the World of Darkness website) and something — a large piece of paper, a cork board or whiteboard, a tablet screen — to hold the Relationship Map (see p. 84). The dice required are 10-sided, available in any game store. You need two colors of dice: one color for regular dice, and another color for Desperation dice.

A Hunter Lexicon

Cell: A group of Hunters, likely of multiple different creeds, united in the interests of protection, teamwork, and common cause

Cellie: A fellow member of a cell; a few Hunters recognize the irony of it also being slang for a prison cellmate

Coalition: A multinational joint task force of orgs dedicated to the eradication of supernatural threats and the preservation of order

Creed: An outlook or approach a Hunter takes to reclaiming the world from supernatural threats, around which a sort of community has emerged

Hunt, the: The pursuit of an individual supernatural creature or group; one specific operation

Jobber: An org hunter; someone who simply “does the job” and exhibits no individual Drive

Org: A formal organization that exists to hunt monsters as a means to an an end rather than for its own sake; orgs often support a status quo situation or preserve the power of elites (or themselves), and are generally larger and better resourced than individual cells

Quarry, the: The target of an individual Hunt; one specific supernatural creature or group

Reckoning, the: The urge to take back the world from supernatural predators, with the urgency of right now in particular; the feeling that the world is at its tipping point

UTR: Unusual Threat Response; the general bureaucratic or military designation for the special police or military units deployed by the Coalition. In general use among H/hunters as a more stylized description of what they do. (Usage akin to a special task force.)

Mature Content Warning

For the past several decades, the World of Darkness games have addressed the darkness in the real world through horror stories. It has talked about AIDS, capitalist exploitation, sexual predation, the resurgence of far-right political extremism, religious fanaticism, state and private surveillance, and many other issues. This entry in the World of Darkness series doesn't shy away from any of the above, and we believe exploration of subjects like these is as valid in roleplaying games as it is in other media. Including a problematic subject in a Storytelling game is not the same as glorifying it, and if you take the chance to explore it critically, it can be the exact opposite. If we understand the problems facing us, we are better armed to fight them.

Hunter: The Reckoning may include in-world references and expressions of the following: miscarriage/infant death, substance abuse, sexual violence, political extremism, physical violence and gore, mind control, torture, abuse, imprisonment and kidnapping, racism, sexism, and homophobia, to name a few. It's a game about monsters and the cruel things those monsters do to people.

"Why are you telling me this?" you might be saying. Someone at your table is not familiar with this game. Someone at your table has dealt with some of these issues in real life. Someone at your table wants to know that you read this warning and know you will be considerate to them as players, while putting their character through the wringer.

In the Appendix, you will find specific techniques on how to handle difficult subjects in your game in a manner that's respectful to your players and their experiences. Calibrate beforehand which techniques your group wants to use. People have different needs, and not every method works for every person.

This is a game about monsters. But it is only a game. Don't use it as an excuse to be a monster yourself. ■

LOVE
LIFE

Chapter One:

A COMING RECKONING

They are everywhere, the creatures of the night. And much of the world doesn't know about them, or refuses to acknowledge their presence.

They are the attractive bartender with whom you think you have a chance, the off-putting cab driver in whose taxi you had a momentary fugue, the stoic executive board member whose assets span continents and centuries.

They are the charismatic radical organizing a protest at the police station, the fence-cutting saboteur in the demilitarized zone, and the regional legend that absconds with children under cover of darkness.

They are the gambler who never loses a hand or the baleful sorcerer who makes an expectant mother miscarry. They are the spook in the window, the impetus behind the haunted-house rumors at the edge of town, the disembodied footsteps in the attic floor after midnight. They are the horned thing moving in the shadows of the trees, blurred at the edges of vision like a half-remembered dream.

They are everywhere in the world, our world, this World of Darkness, and they prey upon those who are most vulnerable to them: the innocent, the uncorrupted, the human and the humane.

A World of Darkness

The world in which the Hunters stalk their powerful quarry is much like our own. Its cities are the same, its leaders are the same, it is occupied by the same people, who have the same loves and endure the same problems. It has the same bars and clubs, the same slums and high-rise apartment buildings, the same multinational companies and the same scandals.

That said, the differences between our world and this World of Darkness are important.

Dark Forces

The supernatural exists and is proximate to an oblivious humanity. Monsters are real — literal, genuine monsters, from blood-drinking vampires to frenzied werewolves to ghosts, warlocks, and even stranger things. And these literal, genuine monsters hide within the structures and communities of human society, which is to say they may be lurking anywhere from the flat next door to the governor's mansion to the dilapidated abattoir on the highway past the city limits.

Their influence is subtle and pervasive: The governor herself isn't the vampire, but she depends upon campaign contributions from the vampire's shell company. The police know about the cursing crone underneath the metro station bridge, but whenever they show up, she waves them past and they ignore her. The slaughterhouse has been "haunted" as far back as anyone can remember, but no one in a position to do anything about it ever does. The influence of the supernatural is subtle when they're not acting overtly destructive... but savvy Hunters can always trace it back to its source.

Monsters are real – literal, genuine monsters, from blood-drinking vampires to frenzied werewolves to ghosts, warlocks, and even stranger things.

Every level of society is infiltrated. Every community might be preyed upon. And in a world that's already morally compromised, where the ability to reap profits and consolidate power takes precedence over the protection of the vulnerable, Hunters serve a role that community leaders or civic authorities who are willing to turn a blind eye won't.

That's the role of the Hunter, to not only speak truth to power, but also to protect those who would otherwise go neglected and ignored. From the Hunter perspective, if the world can be put on a path to Reckoning, the Hunt must begin somewhere, and the supernatural is the most immediate, antithetical threat.

- ➜ Vampiric cults smuggle victims across borders with impunity and sway their victims' emotions, convincing them that they enjoy being the vampires' thralls.
- ➜ Werewolves rampage against the structures that have elevated humanity from the poverty of the past, devoting themselves to a furious primitivism enforced by fang and claw.
- ➜ Sorcerers and warlocks bend reality to their will, with little regard for how others will be affected.
- ➜ Ghosts manifest from beyond the veil of death to haunt the world they've left and possess the living.
- ➜ Even stranger things move through the corners of the world we've forgotten to fear specifically, from otherworldly "good folk" to things from realms of thought unintelligible to humans.

Secrets and Consequences

The World of Darkness is a world of secrets and consequences. Everything from lone horrors to vast conspiracies of supernatural predators prowl the night — and in some cases, even the day. Indeed, simply because something is a conspiracy doesn't make it untrue. If nothing else, the supernatural has a tremendous aptitude at hiding itself.

Enter the Hunters, the dedicated monster-slayers. Standing in opposition to the supernatural has its costs, however. "I've decided to become a monster-hunter" is rarely a message a spouse or partner entertains eagerly. Taking up the Hunter's creed has a monetary cost, as well, as few employers would want the liability of a self-avowed monster-hunter among their staff let alone time away from work to scourge the undead — meaning most Hunters become de facto "professional" Hunters.

The Hunt has other consequences as well. Success is far from guaranteed and may well be unlikely or outright impossible. Unforeseen accidents resulting in tragedies are common. More than one Hunter has injured or even killed a victim they intended to rescue; more than one "monster lair" has been nothing more than an eccentric individual's home. Hunters make mistakes, and the guilt that comes from them can make a Hunter question whether they're better than the monsters, or if they're even making a difference at all.

Gothic-Punk

All of this takes place in a world that's visually almost identical to our own, real, world, but one in which certain themes and experiences come to the fore. Or rather, your troupe will tell stories that bring them to the fore. We refer to this aesthetic, this dramatic narrative worldview, as Gothic-Punk.

Gothic

The Gothic draws on a literary tradition and a heavily emotional worldview as a reaction to clinical reality. Always emotional, at times overwrought, the Gothic approach emphasizes the strange, the forbidden — and the pleasure we take in experiencing it.

Consider the following characteristics of the World of Darkness take on the Gothic.

- Superstition is often at odds with science or rationalism in a Gothic tale, and in many cases, the rational wins out against the supernatural. Note that this won't always be the case in your stories, however — the conflict is what's important to the storytelling, and the supernatural may overwhelm the Hunters, no matter how righteous and rational their cause.
- At the same time, the Gothic exults the sublime, the thrill and wonder we take from fear, terror, and horror. The Gothic provokes in us the same sort of response we would have to beauty. The sublime element, the forbidden thrill, comes in being overwhelmed by some element of the Gothic world. Imagine seeing a vast and starry sky in the cellar below the old mansion, where no sky could possibly exist; imagine being so stunned by your lover's beauty that you yield to them, enraptured, even as they smile and reveal cruel fangs.

The Gothic draws on a literary tradition and a heavily emotional worldview as a reaction to clinical reality.

- Morality often comes to the fore in the Gothic, usually in situations in which it sharply contrasts. A degenerate priest. A family of distinguished lineage harboring a dreadful secret. An innocent child playing alone, as the long shadow of something fiendish and otherworldly falls across them. A single unblemished flower growing against all expectation on the grave of the murderer. Whether literally or symbolically (often both), the Gothic juxtaposes what is good and just with what is wicked and unjust, and some sort of power almost always resides with the wicked and unjust.

- Anachronism, whether in settings ("The silent woman waves you into a parlor that looks like it was set for tea in the late 19th century") or other elements of the story ("The letter has been sealed with wax and the envelope bears a hint of too-sweet lavender. It's a far cry from the printed email you expected.") Note that sometimes the supernatural creatures themselves are anachronisms....

Just as a word of caution here: We're cherry picking. The actual, historical Gothic literary movement has some fairly unenlightened attitudes, especially regarding gender, ethnicity, and matters of "civilization vs. barbarism." Use the cool parts of the genre, not the parts that should be relegated to the historical dustbin.

Punk

At its core, punk is rebellion, change, the casting down of the status quo. By definition, the players' Hunters or other protagonists of the World of Darkness embody this punk ethic because they are inherently agents of change. They make choices that result in consequences, and the assumption is that they don't want to reinforce the status quo. (What the players' characters actually want may well be morally fraught, but that's the purpose of the game's morality and consequence systems, and it reintroduces the Gothic affectation for morality.)

Monsters have power, whether that of a vampire in the bespoke suit lording over the 40th-floor boardroom, to the shaggy terror that has reduced the remote village to quaking fear. Hunters break those monsters' ill-claimed power.

In the context of **Hunter**, each antagonist (or perhaps more than one) exists to take or reinforce control. In many cases, these are agents of the status quo, groups that exist to keep things as they are: functioning to the benefit of a minute group of individuals who derive their wealth, power, status, etc., by dictating structures that prevent, well, practically everyone else in the world from achieving self-determination.

For example, the Society of St. Leopold (see p. 235) does an undeniably beneficial thing in hunting vampires, but it does so to impose its superiors' control, not to altruistically free people from vampiric domination. At the same time, the very vampires the Society hunts seek the subjugation of humans and supremacy of the undead. Hunters don't want either of those outcomes, and rebel against them both. Punk as fuck.

DIY

Of course, the Gothic-Punk aesthetic is a slider, or a spectrum. Your troupe will have its own tastes and preferences, so use the Gothic-Punk mentality to flavor your stories, rather than dictating a narrow experience. We're just suggesting a starting point.

What is the Hunter's Creed?

A Hunter is defined by two things: the Drive to pursue occult enemies, and the particular perspective that informs how they do it. A creed is a methodology, a philosophy, an approach and a validation that staking vampires and silver-bulleting werewolves is right and just.

It's also a peer group. Hunters of the various creeds share their secrets and expertise among one another. Sure, sometimes that sharing is reluctant, jealous, or even motivated by something other than the common good, but essentially, Hunters realize that it's them against the monsters, the orgs, and a world unwilling to acknowledge the occult in its midst.

Creeds communicate in many ways: on weird dark web social networks, in impromptu meetups spread by word-of-mouth, via old-fashioned codes and ciphers, and sometimes by experimental means made possible by their Edges, those advantages they bring to bear against the creatures of the night.

The Creeds

At least five creeds of Hunters exist tonight, though they have no formal limit on how many there might actually be. Creeds don't have a particular origin story — they're emergent, given rise as the world saw need for them, and individual Hunters were willing to take up the cause.

- ***Entrepreneurial*** Hunters take on their quarry with bold innovations and experimental approaches
- ***Faithful*** Hunters operate with a belief in higher powers and a divinely informed worldview
- ***Inquisitive*** Hunters accumulate and employ knowledge against the occult, using both cutting-edge and ancient methods to study and learn about monsters and what they do
- ***Martial*** Hunters reason that hammering down the supernatural threat requires a devotion to arms and tactics
- ***Underground*** Hunters have learned that guile, subterfuge, and knowing the right people can gain one access to the quarry they seek

For more information on how creeds shape the lives of Hunters, see p. 31.

WHAT MAKES A CELL?

Cells are groups of Hunters with Drives who cooperate with one another against the supernatural. That's it. A cell may have two members or a dozen. It may operate in secrecy, or recruit openly. That last approach is extremely risky, but it happens....

Not that any hard data exists on such things, but most cells probably have between three and six members. The reality is that it's not only hard to find Hunters, who need to have survived a revealing encounter with the supernatural long enough to realize a Drive, but that Hunters are the underdog in most interactions with the occult. Managing one successful Hunt, let alone multiple, is a significant accomplishment. Surviving long enough as a group to call themselves a cell is a test not many cells actually pass. Most Hunters die gruesomely; most cells are temporary things.

However, some cells become so effective that they rival small orgs themselves. These paragons of Hunter skill develop strong tactics and have access to puissant tools, and may even hire org-style ranks of order-taking operatives themselves.

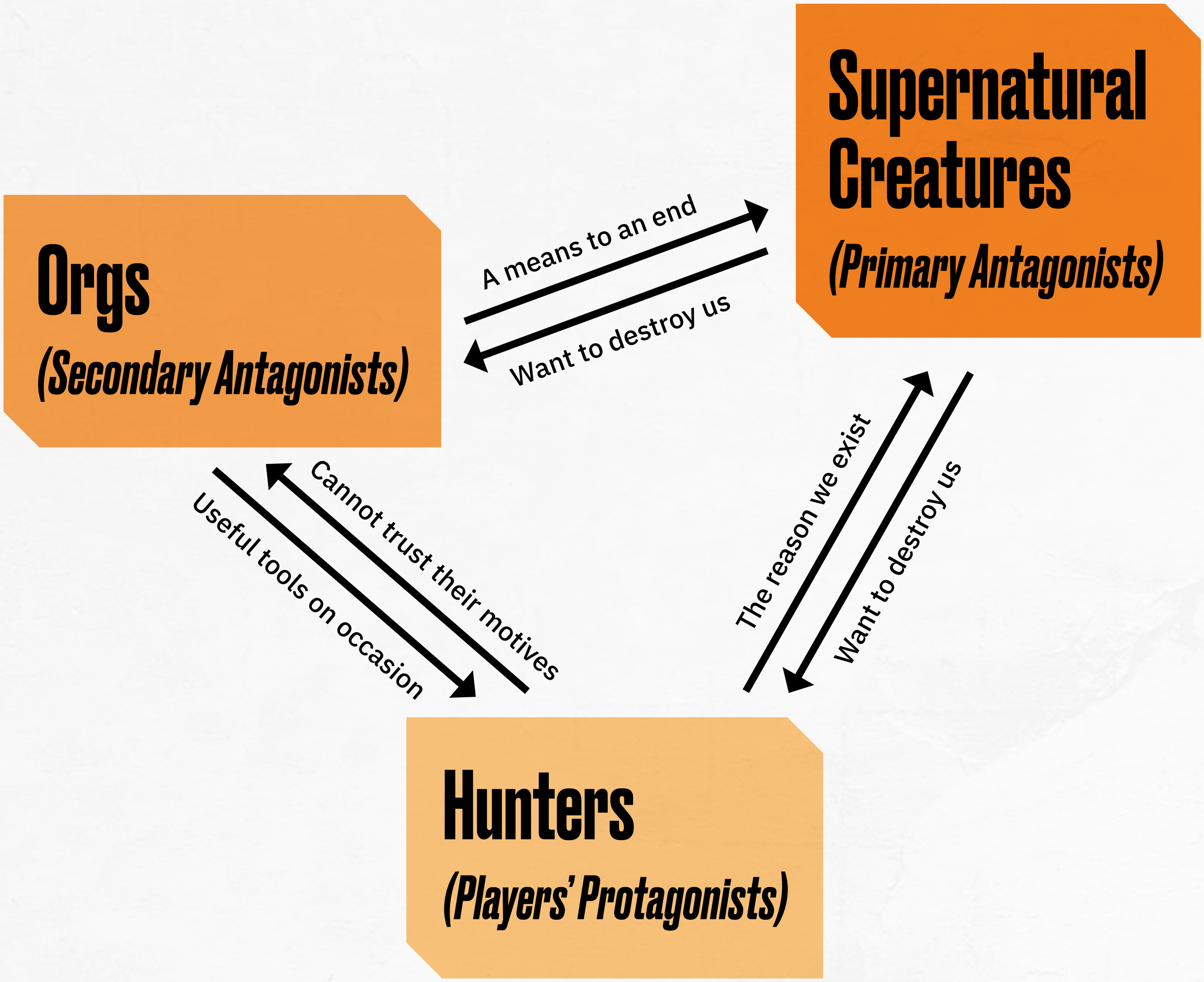
Organized Resistance

Various organizations also exist, contrivances of the human world, to stand in opposition to the supernatural; that's the argument, at least. In reality, these organizations have all been compromised in some capacity, and by human fallibility rather than supernatural manipulation. Usually.

Many agencies that exist ostensibly to protect the public instead act as enforcers of the status quo, concerned more for their own benefit and autonomy than they are about putting down monsters.

This is the situation in which Hunters find themselves, and they have no choice but to make a go of it on their own. The monsters, obviously, must be defended against. The organizations occasionally make for at least a partial ally against those monsters, but none of the organizations are interested in competition with independent cells of Hunters. And while they may share trickles of information or even subcontract out supernatural-hunting ops to individual cells, the orgs are always institutionally self-interested. From the org perspective, Hunters can be used to handle situations that are beneath them — or as bait, to gain more information about the supernatural threats that are by their nature difficult to discover in their entirety.

For more on orgs, see p. 219.


Supernatural Creatures
(Primary Antagonists)
Orgs
(Secondary Antagonists)
A means to an end
Want to destroy us
Cannot trust their motives
Useful tools on occasion
The reason we exist
Want to destroy us
Hunters
(Players' Protagonists)

The Hunter's Journey

No one grows up thinking they'll become a Hunter. Most people don't even know what a Hunter is. Kids play innocent games like cops and robbers, hide and seek, and tag. No kids play "clued-in underdogs versus blood-spattered nightgaunts."

Much of that same innocence is lost as kids mature into adults and realize the world for what it is and the dangerous things that lurk in its liminal spaces. Becoming a Hunter means leaving some amount — perhaps even most — of one's life in ignorance behind. Once a person knows that vampires are real and werewolves walk among us and takes up the cause against them, can they ever really go back to being "just" a software engineer, "just" a convenience-store clerk, "just" a boyfriend or girlfriend? Being a Hunter changes a person.

Very rapidly, being a Hunter becomes a vocation, especially after the awakening of one's Drive.

What Makes a Hunter?

Hunters are aware of the supernatural and have awakened their Drives. That's it. Hunters may have come from orgs or they may have awakened their Drives on their first contact with the supernatural or any one of a myriad other situations. Effectively, a Hunter is someone who knows about the existence of the occult and is self-motivated to take action against it. In almost all cases, Hunters have given up or put on hold their "normal lives" in order to oppose the supernatural. In order to make ends meet, most either take jobs that give them the flexibility to Hunt, or they throw in with a cell which can sustain Hunter activity.

This last is precarious, and many cells just get by. And it's often a source of stress or even alienation for the Hunters. They're doing their best to save the world from monstrous predation, and much of the world holds them in contempt. "Get a real job," the unappreciative and oblivious world says to them. "Pay your rent."

By contrast, those individuals in the employ of orgs don't have Drives pushing them to solve things their own way. In some cases, individuals working for orgs don't even know they're dealing with the supernatural, and may be part of a "top-secret task force investigating terrorist activity and suspected unspecified controlled substances" or whatever it takes to maintain the veil of occult secrecy.

Note that Drives and specific Drive Traits are game terms. A Hunter might admit that they are "driven to seek redemption" but wouldn't say "My Drive is Redemption." For more information on Drives, see p. 127.

WHAT IS THE RECKONING?

Ask a dozen Hunters, get a dozen answers. “The Reckoning” has entered Hunter parlance as of late as a shorthand that conveys the same sort of awareness as many modern social-justice movements.

The phrase itself is vague enough that it doesn’t create any unnecessary difficulties when the Hunter isn’t ready to have them. In this sense, inquiring after a Reckoning works almost like a secret handshake or a code word intended to determine awareness of one another among Hunters. (This is not without risk, as it comes with the potential of being misunderstood as hysterical or conspiratorial. Don’t tell the register clerk that “A Reckoning is coming…” as you try to purchase more than the regulated amount of fertilizer at the home-improvement store.)

At the same time, the Reckoning is a term of immediacy, conveying an effort of resistance against the creatures of the night, in contrast with the human history of dwelling in their shadow and serving or sating their pernicious hungers.

To a Hunter with a Faithful background, it may suggest a time of judgment, such as an era of Revelation or the loosing of Indra’s bolt.

To a Hunter with a Martial background, it may suggest the escalation of operations intended to curtail supernatural influence.

To a Hunter with a businesslike perspective, it might represent “balancing the books,” taking power away from the sinister inequality that has existed between humans and darker powers since time immemorial.

Ultimately, the Reckoning is the struggle against supernatural abuse and domination, and it is now.

The Moment of Truth

The Hunter’s Drive awakens when they realize they can do something to oppose the supernatural threat plaguing the world. With precious few exceptions, this comes at a moment of interaction with the occult itself, which may occur in a huge number of ways, directly or indirectly. A would-be victim might awaken their Drive as a vampire moves in on them for the kill. An investigator reviewing a mountain of evidence might realize the impossible-but-true presence of a circle of sorcerers, while cross-indexing video surveillance with police reports of strange occurrences in their area.

A Hunter’s Drive changes them, even beyond the obvious. It can potentially alter their worldview, turning an introspective mural artist into an instrument of vengeance, or a retired soldier into a boundlessly curious investigator.

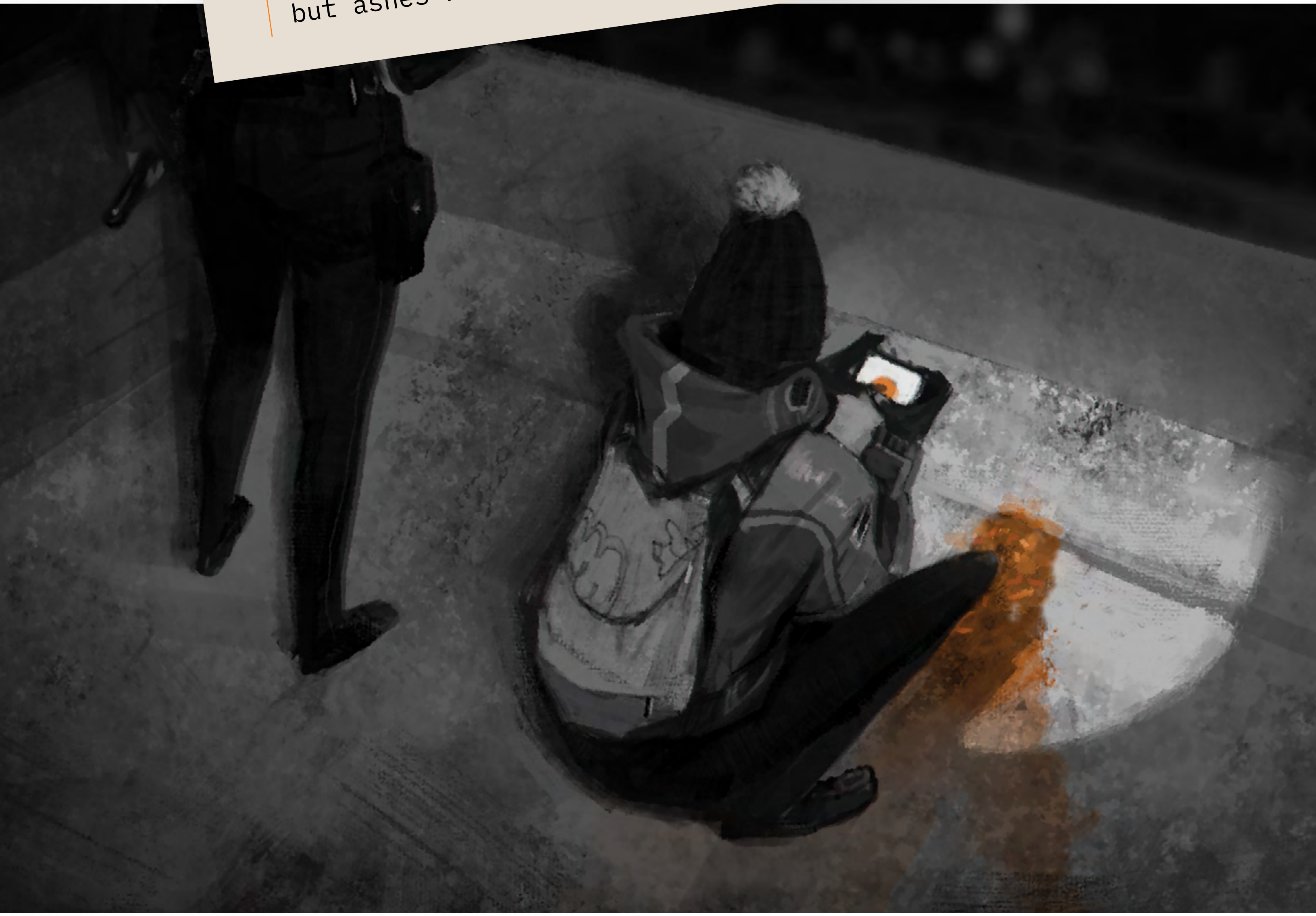
From the moment the Hunter understands their Drive, they realize their calling. Thereafter, the urgency to take action against the supernatural very often becomes their primary concern.

There are plenty of hunters out there who don’t have Drives, of course, such as the student who picked up a baseball bat after realizing his “stepfather” kept coming home covered in blood every new moon, or even the Special Affairs Division agent who realizes she’s not hunting standard drug traffickers. Some people take up the cause because it’s the right thing to do or because it’s their job, but they don’t all have Drive. For some Hunters, working for an org provided the opportunity to awaken their Drive, whereupon they realized that they didn’t actually have much in common with the org at all.

Whitehat1999

Friends and I went urban exploring and found this weird stuff on top of the nightclub in midtown, the one that used to be a mill. We ran some tests on it, and it's human remains, but burnt? The tests didn't show the presence of any accelerant.

Not to get morbid or anything, but if you're going to burn human remains, wouldn't you do it in a crematorium or an incinerator or something? What would make a person catch on fire on a rooftop and burn so hot that nothing but ashes was left?



Finding Fellows

Becoming aware of the presence of the supernatural is a horrific epiphany: the revelation that what one knew about the world up until now, and however much the individual expected a just world, was simply incorrect. Naturally, this learning comes with a host of emotions.

Fear at realizing just what's out there.

Awe at how far the occult influence extends.

Anger at the injustice of such malignant presence.

Anxiety over the risk posed to themselves and their loved ones.

Suspicion of whether anyone they know is in on the conspiracy.

Sadness or alienation at being dismissed by much of human society.

And any number of additional, personal emotions given rise by the Hunter's personal situation. It's only human to seek out the company of others when adversity arises. That's the point of origin for many Hunter cells: resolute comrades in arms when seeking fellows who have learned the same awful truth, but who obviously feel they can't go public with it, because they know the monsters will retaliate.

Hunters may find other Driven colleagues at schools, online, through work, or even when sharing a stiff drink in commiseration. And who knows how many Hunters are out there who haven't yet found their cell because they're personally isolated?

When Things Go Wrong

Strange as it may seem, the depredations of the supernatural aren't the only things a Hunter has to worry about.

THE PRICE OF FAILURE

Since every hunt relies on intel, if the intel is wrong, the cost may well be innocent lives. And at that point, would the monster's victim have been better off without the Hunter there in the first place?

Needless to say, such a catastrophe also places a great burden on the Hunters themselves. Wracked with guilt, their self-confidence undermined, and their esteem in the eyes of trusting peers flagging, Hunters may find themselves burdened by Despair or even questioning what drives them to pursue monstrous threats at all. (For more information on Desperation and Despair, see p. 127–128.)

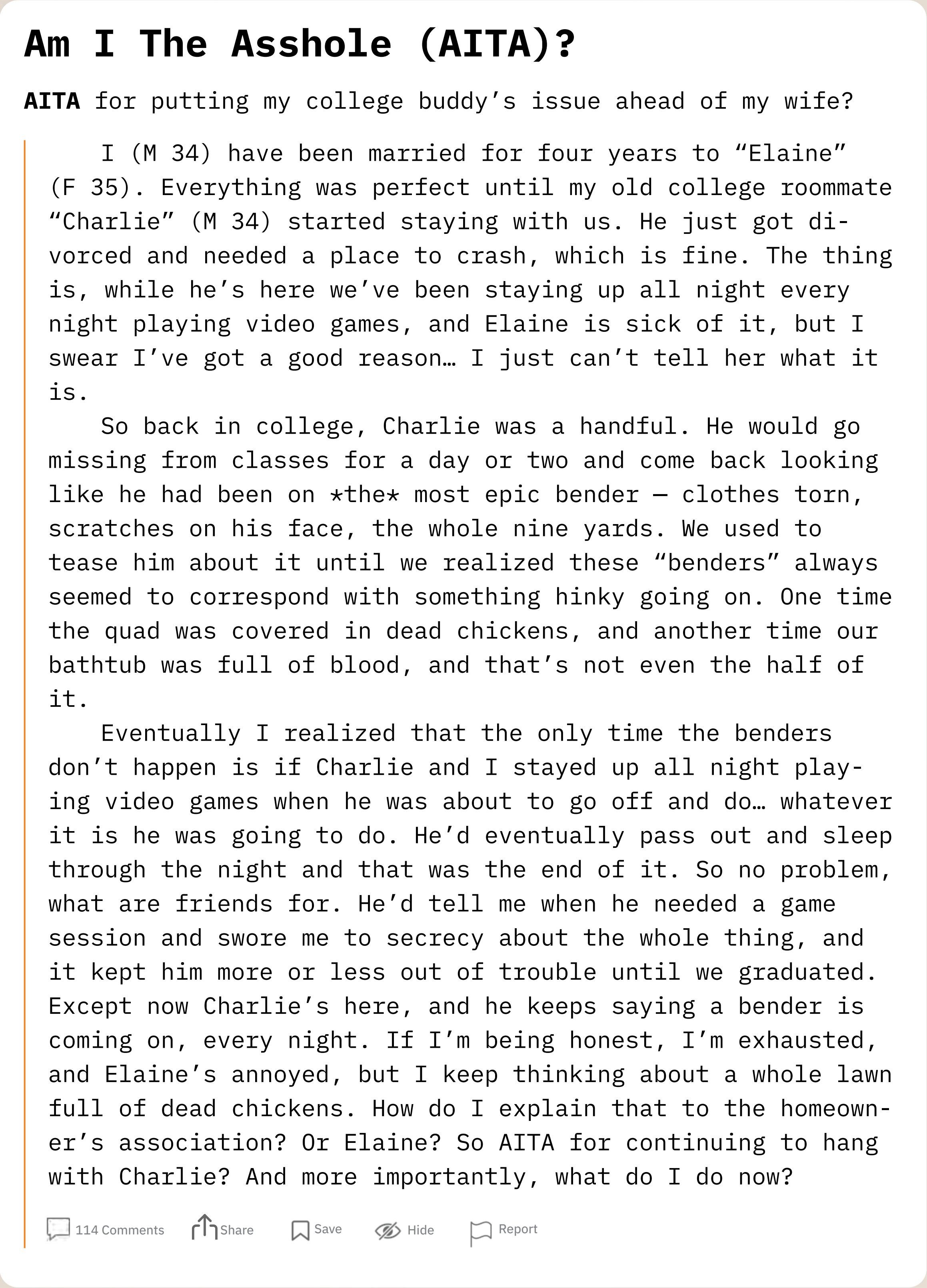
THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

The price of hunting monsters is often one's own sense of what it means to be human. The seemingly unwinnable fight itself practically begs Hunters to take shortcuts, to make excuses, or even to use monstrous powers against the monsters to "fight fire with fire." Drive risks becoming obsession, which can come to dominate the life of the Hunter, resulting in the sacrifice of other attachments: Relationships crumble, mortgages fall into default, crimes become justifiable "for the greater good." In the end, the Hunter may very well stand alone.

Individually and through circumstance, many Hunters find their calling through loss — the victimization of themselves or those for whom they care. This personal connection often turns the calling into its own end, one for which everything and everyone becomes expendable.

These unfortunate truths mean that being a Hunter is very much an experience of perspective. All that stands between a vampire and her victim might be a "deadbeat dad" with a timely stake; the temple may have lost its most charismatic member to "Internet radicalization," who is actually monitoring the actions of bloodthirsty werewolves.

Not every Hunter sees these dire circumstances manifest, but it happens frequently enough that wise Hunters take steps to prevent such outcomes. A Hunter who loses it all isn't an aspirational figure, and is one who has, in a significant capacity, failed. The Reckoning must succeed.



Am I The Asshole (AITA)?

AITA for putting my college buddy’s issue ahead of my wife?

> I (M 34) have been married for four years to “Elaine” (F 35). Everything was perfect until my old college roommate “Charlie” (M 34) started staying with us. He just got divorced and needed a place to crash, which is fine. The thing is, while he’s here we’ve been staying up all night every night playing video games, and Elaine is sick of it, but I swear I’ve got a good reason… I just can’t tell her what it is.
>
> So back in college, Charlie was a handful. He would go missing from classes for a day or two and come back looking like he had been on *the* most epic bender — clothes torn, scratches on his face, the whole nine yards. We used to tease him about it until we realized these “benders” always seemed to correspond with something hinky going on. One time the quad was covered in dead chickens, and another time our bathtub was full of blood, and that’s not even the half of it.
>
> Eventually I realized that the only time the benders don’t happen is if Charlie and I stayed up all night playing video games when he was about to go off and do… whatever it is he was going to do. He’d eventually pass out and sleep through the night and that was the end of it. So no problem, what are friends for. He’d tell me when he needed a game session and swore me to secrecy about the whole thing, and it kept him more or less out of trouble until we graduated. Except now Charlie’s here, and he keeps saying a bender is coming on, every night. If I’m being honest, I’m exhausted, and Elaine’s annoyed, but I keep thinking about a whole lawn full of dead chickens. How do I explain that to the homeowner’s association? Or Elaine? So AITA for continuing to hang with Charlie? And more importantly, what do I do now?

The Hunt

While the premise of the Hunt is straightforward, the complexities of executing it cannot be taken for granted. Certainly, Hunters pursue monsters, but it's not all incendiary devices and circles of salt. Every Hunter's process has personal differences, but investigation and preparation make the difference between success and disaster.

The Hunt Activity by Ratio

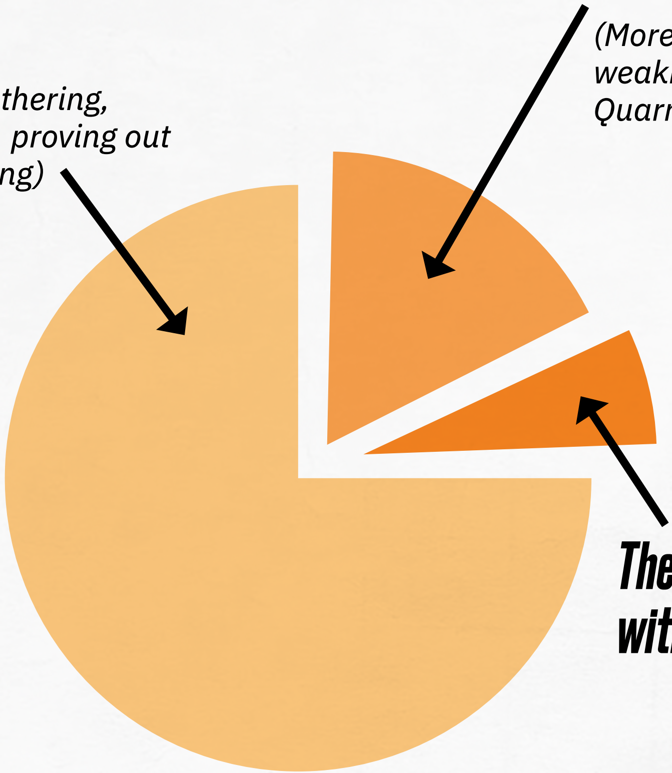


Figure out who the quarry is and what they want

(Information gathering, occult research, proving out theories, planning)

Figure out how to deal with the quarry

(More occult research into weaknesses, habits, what the Quarry might bring to bear)

The actual dealing with the quarry

Preparation by Cooperation: Hunter Cells

Hunter cells are as diverse and even unlikely as the circumstances that have brought them together. A cell can consist of Hunters from any background and any combination of creeds, and often does. Looked at objectively, cells often seem like collections of strange bedfellows. Why are an electrical engineer, a graffiti artist, a hotel housekeeper, and a former member of the Iraqi Republican Guard meeting at the barbershop and whispering to one another? Out of mutual enmity toward the supernatural. Alternatively, why are those five students gathered at the campus coffee shop? Same reason. Whether of widely different circumstances or remarkably similar ones, they all seek to fight back against the presence of the occult.

The same can even be true of those who have different Drives or perspectives on the Hunt. A cell made up of individuals who are members of Martial, Entrepreneurial, and Underground creeds might have met online, at a special interest group, or even in the lair of the quarry and put their talents together to fight back against the supernatural threat.

A cell often serves many purposes to its member Hunters.

Protection

A cell of Hunters provides safety in numbers. A close-knit cell watches one anothers' backs, and its members complement one another's skills. A mistrustful cell treats its members like potential scapegoats, and if things go sideways, they abandon one another.

Everyone Doing Their Part

Cells often form around their members' specialties. That is, the Hunters' particular aptitudes determine how they solve problems for many cells. Not every vampire needs to be dealt with by blowing open the door to the crypt and cutting off their head. A cell with a Hunter who was a property developer and a Hunter on the city council might choose to have the suspected vampire's lair rezoned for commercial real estate, or even bulldozed as eminent domain.

Many cells are ad-hoc democracies, reacting to the presence of supernatural threats as opposed to applying any consistent methodology. It's often inefficient and prone to human differences, but that's the nature of most Hunts. Since every quarry is individual, so must the methods to face them down be. And who's nominally "in charge" likely varies by the phase of the Hunt or whose skill set is most immediately applicable. Trust the Martial Hunter when the guns are drawn; trust the Inquisitive when deciding which lead to follow to the ghost's haunt.

Yet other cells use more proven (or at least adaptable) methods informed by the Hunters' history. Cells formed around military service structures, Unique Threat Response teams, or religious orthodoxies are common. In such cases, the Hunters occupying those roles aren't necessarily very skilled at those duties, but desperate situations mean using what or who's at hand. If they learn and grow into the role, more's the better, but survivability is the greater question. If you don't live long enough to improve the necessary skills, who's going to fill your role next?

Companionship

For many Hunters, the Hunt is a lonely, even alienating affair. A comrade facing the same nemesis and dealing with the same fears builds a relationship of trust and intimacy. Bad companions bully, denigrate, or undermine their fellow Hunters, or demoralize the rest of the cell into distrusting one another's information and competency.

To some, the cell is a sociological "third place" outside the usual social environments of work and home. To many, it actually replaces work and/ or family, as the home dynamic frays and the realities of the Hunt make the Hunter erratic or absent at work.

Preparation by Investigation

Never trust them. Never, ever trust them.
— Earl Oakey, Inquisitive

The supernatural is uncanny.

Very often, Hunters find themselves at an information disparity when dealing with the quarry of any given Hunt, so solving those missing pieces is a critical part of that Hunt. Hunters don't have the benefit of personal insight into the societies of monsters that exist throughout the world. Even if they know they're dealing with a category of quarry, such as a vampire or werewolf, they don't necessarily know the specifics about the individual monster they're dealing with.

Things to Find Out

Wise Hunter cells investigate as part of their preparation. Hunters who don't want to end up dead seek out the answers to what they don't know beforehand. And the best Hunters are savvy enough to figure out what they don't know they don't know — and then address that as well.

WHO IS THE QUARRY?

Sometimes it's obvious who the quarry is. The bloodsucker hunched over his collapsing prey in an alleyway behind the nightclub. The shapeshifter in horrifying silhouette against the full moon, standing on the promontory. The inexplicable tempter with the eyeless face, pulling its victim into the silvered surface under the mirror's glass pane.

Other times, the quarry hides among victims, masquerading as one of them and revealing itself in its awful truth only when far away from the eyes of humans. The supernatural initially builds trust among its victims by pretending similarity to them and then reveals itself in stark contrast when it's too late for the victim to react. The suave vampire in the penthouse loft, the ravening werewolf in the smoke-choked badlands, the warlock sacrificing their prey upon the long-forgotten altar.

Sometimes the quarry appears to be a victim, such as by having a body contorted by strange supernatural corruptions that look like they were inflicted upon it by a more powerful entity. Indeed, sometimes this last is actually true, and the suspected quarry is a mere minion of something much more potent and malevolent. Vampires have been known to twist their servitors into mockeries of their prior forms; sorcerers will sometimes build cults around themselves to perform their bidding. The number of ways the supernatural will distort an unprepared humanity to its purposes is practically limitless. Turning new vampires, spreading lycanthropy, and fostering incomprehensible secret societies are only how they make more of themselves.

Then again, sometimes the individual the Hunters believe is the quarry actually isn't....

IS THE QUARRY SUPERNATURAL?

Seems like an obvious question, but it's critical. More than one Hunter cell has found itself collectively standing over an individual blown in half by a shotgun blast, having prepared to deal with a demon-summoning warlock and not a dreadfully mundane serial killer.

Such a situation always presents a moral quandary to Hunters. Ostensibly, mortal authorities exist under whose jurisdiction the problem of humans preying upon humans falls. Then again, those mortal authorities may be slow to respond, themselves corrupt, or possibly even answerable to a supernatural puppeteer in the shadows. When faced with the urgency of a murderer on the loose or an all-too-human predator in the act, how should a Hunter respond?

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

Quite simply, forewarned is forearmed. Silver bullets may or may not harm a vampire, and a wooden stake probably means fuck-all to a rampaging poltergeist. Being able to pinpoint the nature (or supernature) of the quarry often gives some indication as to how to deal with it.

More importantly, it prevents the Hunt from turning into a catastrophe that could be spun sensationally as a weird cult attack or slaying. Very few Hunter cells want themselves depicted (or arrested) as a weird cult.

IN AFTERMATH

Assuming the Hunt concludes in the Hunters' favor there are other practical details to consider. Often, vampires burn to ash and leave no traces while a ghost may be convinced to return to its own layer of reality. Other agents of the occult, well, they may leave evidence that's harder to explain, and thus wiser to deal with on its own terms. Nobody wants to tell a cop, "We were pretty sure he was a werewolf, officer," whether or not the quarry actually was. There's never anything to be gained by talking to a cop, especially in a situation like this.

WHAT DOES THE QUARRY WANT?

Some supernatural agendas are frightfully simple. A human sacrifice. Virgin blood. Revenge upon a world that hates them.

Some quarry pursue complex, decades-spanning schemes that have context only to them. Inscrutable sorcerers lay out elaborate rituals with many stages and terms of success. Werewolves wage war against progress, in a sequence of small slaughters that add up to a big picture that makes sense only to werewolf mentality. Ghosts may have left unfinished business in the world of the living, and stage elaborate haunts to resolve these elements of their past or engineer vengeance against those who caused their downfall.

Some wants are endemic — vampires need blood to survive. Other wants are more personal, such as one vampire wanting to engineer the destruction of another for a perceived slight at their secret courts during a bygone era.

From the Hunter perspective, what the quarry wants matters much more than why they want it, but both are useful because both give them insight into how to stop the quarry from achieving it. Knowing that the vampire seeks survival by taking blood means the Hunters need to keep an eye out among the most vulnerable individuals in the vampire's territory. Knowing that the vampire's pursuing a longstanding grudge means they should pay attention to the vampire's assets and those of the rival, as well, survival and pride in this case being two very different motivations — and, likely, machinations.

WHAT ARE THE QUARRY'S HABITS?

Where does the supernatural creature go, when, and why? Do they prowl for victims in the overlooked dive bars and gambling halls of Rosebank? Skulk the high-profile debauches of Ibiza for young blood? Tempt the young and impressionable into perdition from the Leningradsky Station?

More and more, Hunters are coming to realize that monsters hide among human society, meaning that even when they aren't doing overtly monster things, they're there, lurking amid the throngs. Does the jaded vampire visit mortal coffee shops to savor the warmth and reconnect with lost humanity? Does the eldritch hierophant have a membership at the art museum and season passes to the opera? Does the suspected werewolf ride with the Argentine gauchos during cattle-driving season?

And what do the even stranger things do to pass their time incalculably at the edges of the places where people congregate and the mystery-shrouded regions beyond? Does the avatar of the Great God Pan haunt the ruins of a temple ground in Wales?

In short, how can the Hunters turn the quarry's routine against them?

WHO ELSE KNOWS?

Even beyond the Hunt for the quarry, sometimes a Hunter needs to plan how to cover their tracks or deal with duplicitous allies.

Unwanted Attention

If it were so simple as just killing monsters, the world wouldn't look at Hunters the way it often does, as people who seemingly have a hard time separating reality from their own delusion. A werewolf's rampage averted, the Hunters would be their hometown's *cause célèbre*.

But when a werewolf reverts to human form after being killed and an investigative reporter finds a distant ramshackle home with that human form dead on the ground and a bunch of armed vigilantes celebrating, well, that tells a different story.

Allies and Assholes

Dealing with the orgs themselves is similarly a blessing and a curse for many Hunters. Orgs can often offer valuable information, and information is a critical part of the investigation. Some can provide cutting-edge gear or indemnity against accidents. The orgs aren't altruistic, though, and they almost always want something up front or in return.

Some orgs contract Hunters to handle the jobs they can't comprehend or can't be bothered with. For example, a Special Affairs Division operation that discovers what appears to be ghostly activity might well hand off the investigation to this local pack of crackpot ghostbusters to take care of, both to keep them out of SAD's hair and to make sure SAD's rivals in the Information Awareness Office can't come claim jurisdiction.

Some orgs coordinate with Hunters in a lopsided form of cooperation. Arguably these are the worst situations — invariably, the cell ends up doing the dirty work, and the org gets what it wants, whatever that is. The rogue spirit ends up being contained, thanks to the Hunters' efforts, and Monster-X gets all the good Public Relations and stock valuation increase.

Sometimes the orgs are setting up the Hunters to take a fall for an op gone bad, or just to shut them down so they don't get too big for their britches. France's DGSE is good to take credit for the "terrorist operation averted" in Marseille, when the "terrorists" happen to be the vampire they were there to hunt and the Hunters who found the blankbody's lair and did most of the infil/ exfil. Nobody's looking too closely when everyone's patting themselves on the back.

From the Hunter perspective, when the orgs know the cell is in operation, the project's already half-compromised. But the cell almost always forges forward with the op itself, because the alternative is to let the quarry continue to rampage and the org to deal with it on their terms. Either way, someone other than the cell is getting their preferred outcome.

MONSTER-X™

Welcome to Monster-X!

We're glad you've decided to join us in our **Crusade**™ to Make the **Sun Shine**℠. We look forward to a long, fruitful relationship together in Unusual Threat Response, but should unforeseen externalities align to yield an early end to our relationship, know that we've got you covered.

Before you're introduced to the team, you'll be responsible for completing the following new-hire paperwork and onboarding with our People and Projects team.

- **Acknowledgement of paid time off (PTO) policy and schedule**
- **Benefits election (health/ life/ dental/ vision) for you and your family**
- **Medical/ dependent care Flexible Spending Account election**
- **401(k) deferral election or Individual Retirement Arrangement substitute***
- **Accidental Death and Dismemberment disbursement election and next-of-kin declaration**
- **Non-Disclosure Agreement and Agreement of Non-Disclosure of Non-Disclosure Agreement**

** Matching funds are available only for Monster-X's 401(k) benefit and unavailable for personal IRAs.*

Once everything's in order, we'll match you with your Investigation Unit and training will begin!

Glad to have you on board.

E.B.

Evelina Budrys

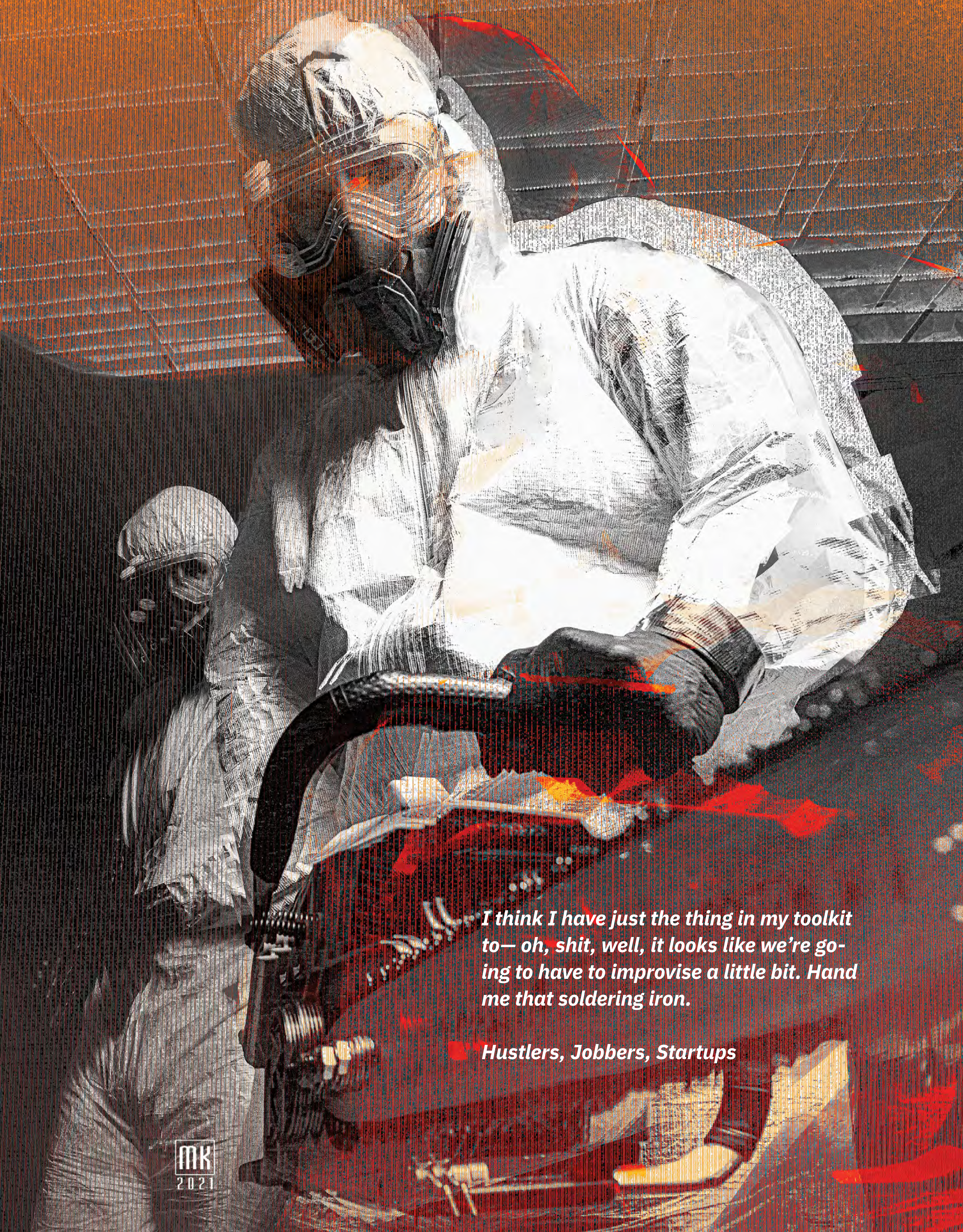
MK
2021

CREEDS: HUNTER PROTAGONISTS

Creeds serve the purpose of helping to distinguish the players' Hunters from the orgs. Belonging to an org is a job. Upholding a creed is a way of life, a personally defining perspective.

These philosophies, known as creeds, reflect not only the approach individuals take to the Hunt, but also points of social commonality that simply don't exist in a greater world that doesn't realize that monsters are out there. When your job is ghost-hunting, who makes a better confidante than another ghost-hunter? Creeds as entities are present in the world, acknowledged among members as part secret society, part professional interest group.

In most cases, a cell is made up of Hunters of different creeds. This offers cells a broad set of perspectives and approaches upon which to draw. It is a limited toolbox that contains only hammers, after all.



I think I have just the thing in my toolkit to— oh, shit, well, it looks like we're going to have to improvise a little bit. Hand me that soldering iron.

Hustlers, Jobbers, Startups

ENTREPRENEURIAL

The Entrepreneurial creed brings an innovation-minded perspective to the Hunt and the possible ends to which monsters-as-resources can be turned. The Entrepreneurial toolbox includes everything from proprietary monster-hunting protocols to experimental technologies to strange derivatives of supernatural reagents. Entrepreneurial Hunters may even use product-style R&D to address the threats posed by supernatural creatures.

Needless to say, this approach has its benefits and its drawbacks. In terms of benefits, Entrepreneurial Hunters can cultivate an advantage over their quarry, developing new technologies and approaches that sometimes confound the more traditional and even folkloric of supernatural threats. As regards drawbacks, one risk is that that emergent technology itself has no moral bent, meaning that the tools developed to fight the night-haunts can also be used by the night-haunts, or even for other purposes unforeseen during development.

An Entrepreneurial Hunter might expect to innovate a way to use vampire blood coagulant against the undead, improvise an effective weapon from the strange techno-fetishes in the sorcerer's sanctum, hack into a private database listing a warlock's assets and allies, network with contacts who can provide valuable information on the suspected location of the werewolf's den, and disrupt the hierarchy of unwitting human servants of the quarry.

Personality

Most obviously, risk-takers, tool innovators, and those who prefer a little more, say, operational leeway gravitate toward the Entrepreneurial creed. Problem-solving is the way of the creed, whether by proven and efficient means, or by trial and error with much room for spontaneity.

Some among the Entrepreneurial Creed may have had a background in disciplined environments such as the military, or through business backgrounds with extensive protocols. Others are the classic "mad scientist" types or garage inventors. Many say they feel the world slipping away from them and uphold a vision that gives them back what they think they've lost.

Clever individuals have even found a way to make a living from the Hunt. For those who have discovered the ugly truth about the presence of the supernatural, getting paid to make the world a better place is a satisfying confluence of interests. At least until those ugly truths turn optimism into tragedy.

Tactics

Entrepreneurial Hunters may go into hunts with the intention to capture or even observe rather than kill, except in cases where they're dealing with known murderous entities. Part of the opportunity-seeking nature of an Entrepreneur's Hunt is to come back with some critical resource that can be subject to experimentation. This, in turn, leads to specialized equipment that can aid in a conflict or even into a product that could be synthesized or reproduced and sold. This might be something as straightforward as silver bullets or something as subjective as protective amulets, to whatever benefits the Entrepreneur considers justifiable to recoup costs.

Hunter "companies" with Entrepreneurial members may employ untested approaches. In some cases, those Hunters don't know they're being risky, in fact, and in some cells, Hunters must improvise because no actual playbook exists, and any experience at all becomes a literal lifesaver. Unfortunately, this also makes the outcomes unpredictable. When someone orders a pizza from a pizzeria, they generally get a pizza. When someone orders an exorcism from a struggling Entrepreneurial cell, they may get a catastrophe.

Dangers

Beyond the personal moral risks of hunting the supernatural, there's always the potential for the quarry to capture valuable prototypes, and even use the Hunters' own tools and weapons against them. The Entrepreneurial Hunter relies greatly on their gadgets, kitbashes, gear, and weapons; so not only does putting one in the hands of the enemy deprive the Hunter of it, it may well add that capacity to the quarry, if the monster can figure out how to use it.

The capture approach is a risky proposition, as it potentially exposes hunters to the malignant powers of the supernatural quarry. A destroyed vampire can't bogart one's mind, but who knows how an imprisoned vampire might be able to do it — whether they're looking into one's eyes or making one an emotional captive by force of personality, or just using some blood-cursed nastiness to boil one's eyes out of their head. To say nothing of moving faster, hitting harder, and being tougher than the Hunters themselves.

SUGGESTED EDGES

Fleet, Improvised Gear, Drone Jockey

COMMON DRIVES

Curiosity, Greed, Envy

DESPERATION DICE FIELDS

Building, inventing, augmenting, or repairing while on the Hunt.

Entrepreneurial Archetypes

Full-Time Part-Timer

Both the car and the apartment are under lease and both payments fall on the same paycheck period every month. A stroke of luck, then, to find the ad in the back of the alternative newspaper: high pay, flexible schedule, learn on the job, and not selling knockoff perfumes face-to face. Turns out, it was some multilevel-marketing scheme selling cut-rate exorcisms, but as the Full-Time Part-Timer discovered, there's much more to the supernatural than bilking old people out of their retirement savings. The third job went ass-over-teakettle, but instead of checking out, the Full-Time Part-Timer opened their eyes to the presence of the occult and threw themselves into it wholeheartedly. Now they're working with some like-minded Hunters and learning a bit of industrial engineering while they're at it. And setting the world right — hopefully — instead of defrauding people.

Contract Broker

Into the goddamn breach again, and once again with inadequate gear, because taking contracts for orgs only gives access to their castoffs. If it weren't for the Contract Broker, the cell wouldn't even be getting hazard pay this time around, but after that last debacle at the chemical plant, that was all the leverage the team needed. The Contract Broker feels a bit guilty for misrepresenting exactly what kind of "pest control" the team does with the union officials, but they're not going to be the one to break the news to the world. For now, it's enough to keep the team safe, keep the clients from asking too many questions, and keep the right amount of money flowing in the right direction. Bloodsuckers on both sides of the goddamn job.

Influencer

Twenty years ago, it would have been called a PSYOP and handled by a branch of the military. Today, it's ostensibly a side hustle in Public Relations, and the Influencer is a rainbow-haired zoomer who discredits evidence of their cell's operations as creepypasta from back at HQ — which is an hourly shared workspace that moves frequently enough to hopefully avoid any habit-building that the quarry can discern. The Influencer has all but shit themselves multiple times with the videos and other media records they're supposed to scrub, but it's work the cell needs done. At some point, something's got to give, and the Influencer is going to either end up in the field getting a firsthand look at some of the ill business the cell sends them in zip files, or they're going to disappear once the quarry gets wise to their patterns.

Club Promoter

The Club Promoter has spent years in various nightlife scenes — a few years before they were legally supposed to, but definitely long enough to have a sense that there's a special sort of monster that likes to prowl among the places where humans go to let loose and enjoy themselves. In fact, they saw it happen, once, and that was all it took to let them know they wanted to both make things happen in the club scene but also work behind the curtain to protect it. Since then, the Club Promoter has seen themselves like a spider in a web, setting bait to coax the quarry into their own domain, where they can spring the trap. And on the morning after, headache-y and hungover, the Club promoter worries whether they're doing the right thing, gambling with lives like this.

Many will face struggle in their lives, but few struggles are so overt, so existential, as the struggle between monsters and innocence.

Avengers, Innocents, Redeemers

FAITHFUL

In churches, pagodas, mosques, and temples, Hunters of faith gather. They band together to hold the line against things only hinted at in their respective sacred texts. Some have found that unwavering faith can be a powerful asset against the monsters that prowl the night. Few burn with a righteousness so potent as those of the Faithful creed, which they may take up as a spiritual weapon or other tool of the Hunt.

For the Faithful Hunter, belief in some sort of higher power shapes their perspective on ridding the world of monsters. Supernatural creatures might represent notions of mortal sin, sent to seduce or victimize, or might be members of unholy hosts at odds with the very existence of the world. Faithful Hunters might also subscribe to dualistic worldviews, seeing themselves as agents of spiritual Light in immemorial conflict against tides of Darkness.

Faithful Hunters might expect to rebuke an impure purveyor of otherworldly temptation in their fleshpot lair, counteract the profane curses of a muttering hierophant, empower the other Hunters in the cell with their own zeal, repel the degenerate spawn of an undead firebrand, and scourge their hometown of supernatural evil given worldly form.

Personality

The stereotype of the Faithful hunter is the fire-and-brimstone zealot, which has come to characterize the creed's reputation. In truth, the Faithful creed is much broader and not necessarily as violently intractable. A Faithful might be a temple monk coming out of the cloister, seeking to restore harmony to a natural order that some rampaging blood-fiend has tainted. Then again, they might be a self-styled "missionary" imposing their beliefs in a locale that didn't invite them.

Faithful Hunters include those who are quietly relentless in their opposition to the supernatural, or who see themselves as the shield of righteousness rather than its sword, protecting those who rely upon them rather than building a conflagration of the impure. The end result may be the same, but in occupations in which soul-scarring horrors and the cost of victory alike might resign one to living perdition, a pure heart and good intentions make all the difference. From the exorcist priest in their cassock to the esoteric tomb-explorer, Faithful Hunters seek out what's wrong, per their spiritual outlook on the world, and set it right.

As well, not every faith or Faithful Hunter subscribes to the holier-than-thou outlook attributed to their most overbearing members. Many Faithful hunters are worldly, pragmatic, charitable — and any number of additional characteristics espoused by paragons of their faith. A disaster-aid worker looking to help a stricken community rebuild after a tornado might be a Faithful Hunter, or even a corporate cutthroat with especially strong conviction. As well, many find themselves having a sympathetic outlook toward the more pathetic of their quarry, knowing that every monster has become a monster for a reason, and the blame isn't always theirs.

Tactics

More than the other organization types, Faithful Hunters pursue and employ both True Faith and a number of potent relics (in the form of Endowments — see p. 97). True Faith and faith, however, are very different things. Indeed, some members of the Faithful creed have neither True Faith nor access to relics themselves — they are part of the grassroots creed movement to oppose the occult nonetheless, and some are fortunate enough to discover relics that have fallen into the employ of pernicious creatures. To this end, much of a Faithful Hunter's time might be spent in research, observation, or reclamation of relics, and thereafter in contemplation, study of holy rubrics, or other edifications of the holy self.

On the Hunt, Faithful often act conservatively, "by the book" for whatever practice their personal faith supposes. But of course, Faithful mavericks definitely exist, likely protected by catechisms that act as a bulwark against temptation and other vices wielded by the malign.

All of this varies greatly, however, by the values and background of the faith in question. One Faithful might well fight in the orderly idiom of beatific warrior-monks while another Hunter practices outlawed guerrilla tactics borne of decades of persecution by oppressive cultures.

Dangers

Sometimes, a Faithful Hunter might seek to execute the agenda of a religion or even a faith-based org. This is an especially perilous situation, as too often the structures that purport to represent higher powers have little in common with the professed perspectives of those higher powers. In extreme cases, Faithful Hunters' primary objective is to maintain organizational power or cultural dominance — not unlike an org. "Love thy neighbor"? More like "Persecute the deviant." This isn't true of all faiths, however, and is riskiest among religions that are prevailing faiths in their cultures and that are also especially aggressive, culturally speaking.

A crisis of faith is a concept that surpasses creeds, but it can also undermine a Hunter whose resolve is otherwise unshakeable. Such may be the result of intransigent dogma or even a penchant for justifying one's Drive behind a personal mythology of a greater good.

SUGGESTED EDGES

Library, any Endowments

COMMON DRIVES

Oath, Atonement, Vengeance

DESPERATION DICE FIELDS

Any direct conflict (physical, social, or mental) with the supernatural while on the Hunt.

Faithful Archetypes

Absolver

Ritual is the most potent weapon in the Hunter's arsenal, from the Absolver's point of view. Once the victim knows they're the victim — before or after their death — the Absolver grants them absolution from whatever (real or imagined) failings that brought the victim to the attention of the occult, and thereafter swears to hold the monster accountable. The Absolver has seen numerous victims and pursued numerous quarry — their rite of absolution has worked almost half a dozen times now, and each subsequent Hunt makes the ritual more and more precise.

Death's-Brink Convert

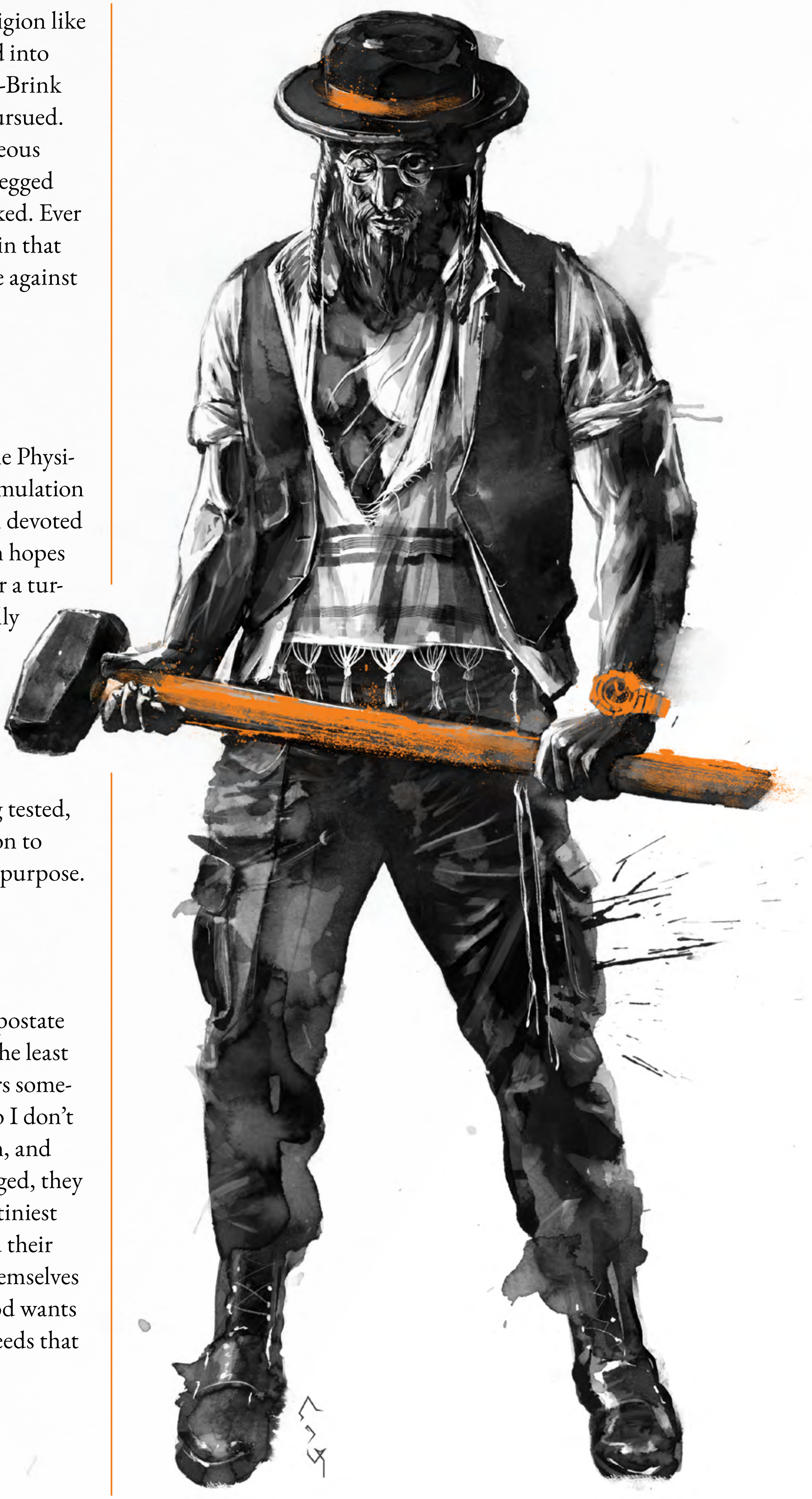
It's a modern world, and the Death's-Brink Convert didn't see much use for religion. Too many practical realities, too much conflict between the observable realities, too many shitty zealots wielding their religion like a cudgel. But that one year, as the world moved into winter and the nights grew longer, the Death's-Brink Convert felt themselves stalked… haunted… pursued. And then, in one terrible moment of simultaneous revelation and massive personal danger, they begged forgiveness for their wayward life… and it worked. Ever since, they've honored the promise they made in that baleful moment and have taken up the crusade against the pawns of the Adversary.

Physical Specimen

Practicing a rigorous form of ritual exercise, the Physical Specimen seeks perfection of the body in emulation of the divine. Years ago, the Physical Specimen devoted themselves to a remote religious community in hopes of finding personal balance and discipline after a turbulent youth. The temple wasn't what it initially appeared to be, however, and one night found the Physical Specimen overpowering the thing that had pretended to be one of them and hid among them. Since then, the Physical Specimen has come to a different perspective on their faith — others might say they're being tested, but the Physical Specimen knows their devotion to improving their physical acumen has a greater purpose.

Apostate

In their many, many years on the Hunt, the Apostate has seen and heard many strange things. Not the least of these is a paradoxical riddle the bloodsuckers sometimes say to themselves — I am the monster, so I don't become the monster. Weird stuff to begin with, and the Devil tells many lies, but as the Apostate aged, they saw the wisdom in it, letting oneself in on the tiniest bit of what it means to be the thing they spend their nights stalking. At least they're honest with themselves — they're hooked on vampire blood, but if God wants them to keep killing vampires, the Apostate needs that vampire blood to go on.



An ounce of prevention is worth a couple hundred pounds of getting torn inside out.

Visionaries, Sleuths, Sherlocks

INQUISITIVE

Not all Hunters are new to the mysteries of the occult. Some already know something of the secret world around them and seek to gain ever-deeper understanding of the metaphysics of the supernatural. Those of the Inquisitive creed are less likely to destroy their prey outright, instead opting to garner occult knowledge from them or even arrange risky appeasements in the hope that information gathered now will yield greater protections in the future. For many Inquisitives, knowledge is its own reward.

Inquisitive Hunters perceive a world shrouded in supernatural darkness and seek to push back that shadow by shining the light of knowledge upon it. Discovering the extent and function of the secret world and the creatures that occupy it is the focus of Inquisitive efforts. They may be tech-savvy information-raiders, skilled on-site infiltrators, or introverted archivists, but all believe and share a desire to know more.

Inquisitive Hunters might expect to research the history of their city with regard to unspeakable cults, discover the location of the quarry's lair through indexing arcane telemetry data, infiltrate a shell company used to hide a mysterious individual's assets, record the salient details of entering a fiend's lair, and archive the methods and results of a successful Hunt.

Personality

Many Inquisitives take a very pragmatic approach to the Hunt, and their personality is marked by a desire to know more about a problem before attempting to solve it. They're the type of people who take apart clocks, learn languages to read untranslated books, or sneak into the lab after it's closed. Show them a lock and they'll demand the key; show them a wall with a missing brick and they'll find something to poke into the hole.

Individually, the motives and methods of Inquisitives vary greatly. Some are clever, and take personal satisfaction in outwitting not only the monsters but also the orgs (or even the less subtle Hunters). Or they may be fearless information-gatherers, perhaps with military reconnaissance backgrounds, espionage training, or raw charisma that allows them to move among any number of subcultures, all of which might be hiding supernatural intrusions. Still others see themselves as masters of secrets, organizers of knowledge, or even more prosaic fact-finders in a world that protects itself by not knowing what they discover.

Some Inquisitives grow frustrated with the seemingly limitless timetable of the learning effort that can be the trademark of the creed. Many observers of the occult seem to exhibit no urgency — monsters are preying on people, and, guess what, the Hunters already know that, so at some point, the impetus to actually do something about it may come to the fore. Unsurprisingly, these latter individuals are the most likely to ignite a Drive and take up the Inquisitive cause, even if the creed itself has the most removed, bookworm-ish reputation.

Tactics

The stereotype of the Inquisitive Hunter is the bespectacled intellectual, greatly outmatched by brawnier or better-equipped Hunters. Inquisitives know this, of course, and are therefore among the most knowledgeable and prepared Hunter creeds. Taking to heart the wisdom that understanding one's enemy is the best weapon to wield against them, Inquisitives are often the best-informed about what they're getting into, or at least knowing the "known unknowns." Let the hooahs kick down the doors and open fire — the wise Inquisitive will already have come in and exited through the basement window, taking the quarry's journals and the most revealing trinkets from its lair.

This stands in complement to Inquisitives' motives. Actually destroying monsters is often far down the list of priorities — the most important thing is to learn, and the best way to pass on that learning is to be able to share it with someone else. No surprise, then, that Inquisitive Hunters favor survival tactics over engagement tactics. This also means that most Inquisitive Hunts are focused more on reconnaissance than target neutralization, and therefore, comparatively lightly armed. The occult nature of the supernatural means that Inquisitives know well how uninformed they are about their targets, so withdrawal almost always makes more sense than a sustained conflict.

In general, this extends to the sorts of Hunts Inquisitives generally undertake against supernatural foes. Inquisitives are much more likely to rescue a victim, recover some sort of insight-yielding artifact, collect a "sample" from an inert or incapacitated target, or confirm previously observed data about a greater supernatural-creature type than they are to exterminate a werewolf den with extreme prejudice. And the Inquisitive is probably the first one to say, "Maybe we shouldn't hit the suspected vampire nest at night, since that's when they're active." Learn 2 Hunt, n00b.

Dangers

Perhaps the most immediate danger to Inquisitive Hunters is that they seek knowledge of things that actively want to obfuscate information about their presence. And the second-most immediate danger is that many of these supernatural beings are both powerful and actively hostile to those who would reveal their presence or glean their secrets. Inquisitives aren't the most martially inclined of the organization types, and the combination of these three factors often makes for short, gruesomely ended careers among Hunters. Without the arsenal or tactical prowess available to the other creeds, Inquisitives often don't have the luxury of calling in "the big guns" once they've tipped their hands.

Complicating things is that Inquisitives often prepare in broad strokes, but may find themselves unprepared for specific eventualities. An Inquisitive-led cell may know that they're up against a vampire, and that garlic and crosses don't work against vampires but fire does — and then the cell would be completely unprepared as the vampire steps out of a shadowy alcove behind them, because who knew that vampires could walk through shadows? The impractical Inquisitive often ends up being their own inadvertent foil.

SUGGESTED EDGES

Library, Global Access, Beast Whisperer, Sense the Unnatural

COMMON DRIVES

Curiosity, Pride, Greed

DESPERATION DICE FIELDS

Gaining information while on the Hunt, such as research, breaking-and-entering, and interrogation.

Inquisitive Archetypes

Data Liberator

On a lark, the Data Liberator bought a dump of a Tokyo bank's user information and dug into it for the lulz — and then found some eyebrow-raising entries. Initially, the Data Liberator assumed it was a Panama Papers-style tax dodge, and the further they dug, the more they realized that's exactly what it was… but for accounts that were all hundreds of years old. Or rather, it was multiple accounts that all came back to a single owner who had obviously taken pains to prevent someone from finding out this exact thing. Turns out, there are other people who found anomalies like these, and now the Data Liberator is in communication with many of them, across unknown geographical distances. What to do with it once they draw more connections, though?

Claims Specialist

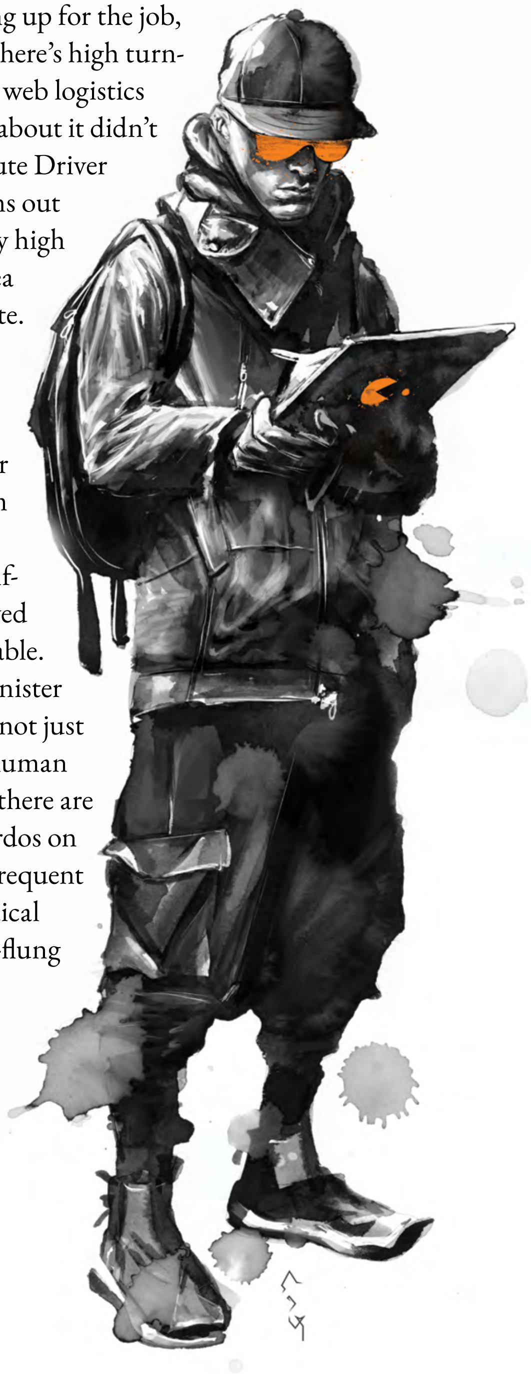
Insurance companies don't get rich by paying out on claims, so the Claims Specialist's job is to make sure the company actually needs to cover the settlement. There's a weirdly satisfying, voyeuristic element to knowing so much about the things people value and keep in their homes, and it's a trove of information (and no few password cues). So when the Claims Specialist discovered one of their accounts had insured a series of "historical curiosities venerating Moloch," they knew they needed the help of other interested — and competent — individuals to dig a little deeper.

Adjunct Professor

The Adjunct Professor knew something was up when they noticed the inordinately long tenure of the school's most "eccentric" emeritus. Their naturally suspicious nature encouraged them to look into it, but also very quickly to shut up about it, since any time they asked, reproaches quickly followed. They've made a few trustworthy contacts in the pursuit of what's actually going on, but it's taking its toll — adjunct teaching made for its own financial hardships and now the Adjunct Professor's boyfriend has drawn the line at hearing any more about ancient mummies or whatever at the university. They're one more argument or hostile bursar away from living in their car.

Route Driver

The three people who had the Route Driver's route before them all stopped showing up without notice. Like, not only quit showing up for the job, just vanished. Sure, there's high turnover in these sorts of web logistics jobs, but something about it didn't sit right, and the Route Driver went searching. Turns out there's an abnormally high crime index in an area that overlaps the route. A few other locals have twigged to the disappearances, too, and the Route Driver is working with them to solve the mystery, each by bringing a different kind of observed information to the table. There's something sinister about it, because it's not just property crime, it's human disappearance. And there are more than a few weirdos on the route who have frequent shipments of — medical supplies?— from far-flung senders.



Taking back the world means it's going to be a fight, and I'm going to bring that fight to the sons of bitches who are pulling it into their shadow.

Warriors, Avengers, Defenders

MARTIAL

Members of the Martial creed favor direct, combative, even overtly violent approaches to the Hunt. They reason that destruction is the least common denominator of monster hunting, and that the best defense against the supernatural is decisive offense. Most are smart enough to realize that they're perpetual underdogs against the supernatural, of course, and try to equalize those odds with extensive training and firepower. Other Hunters may see them as courting unnecessary risk, but when the chips are down and the monster isn't exactly where they thought it would be or vulnerable to what they thought it was, everybody wants a Martial Hunter on their side.

It's a creed that of course lends itself to certain stereotypes, but for every ex-military sharpshooter, there are a dozen wrench-wielding plumbers who have had enough, magazine editors taking advantage of their self-defense classes, and gearheads who know that even a vampire won't get up from being run over by a heavy- and fast-enough car.

A Martial Hunter might expect to fight a desiccated vampire in its shabby mansion, ambush a werewolf prowling through the slums, attack the corrupt cultists of a demented warlock, shoot their way out of a Coalition kill box, or strike the bloodsucker who thought they'd found a powerless victim.

Personality

The Martial creed suggests a simplistic approach, but in truth this creed includes a breadth of Hunters who are Driven by a wide spectrum of motivations. Some are idealistic neophytes who favor unambiguous action, some have served and trained in militaries, and some want to "cut out the middleman" and bring down the supernatural whatever the cost. Martial creed Hunters may not even be on the front lines themselves, operating in more of an engineering or support capacity for their cell, but preferring the combative solution nonetheless.

Other creeds sometimes misidentify the Martial creed as hasty or even bull-headed, but the nuances of the creed don't bear this out. More so than foolhardiness, the Martial Hunters usually seek finality. Whatever brought them to the Hunt, they don't want to risk the same tragedies for other people, and they Hunt to protect as much out of any inherent stubbornness. The only good monster is a dead monster, and preferably one they killed themselves, so there's no ambiguity about the outcome.

Tactics

Find the quarry; destroy the quarry. That's the root of the Martial creed.

In practice there's more nuance to the Martial creed, but at its essence is driving the critical stake through the heart or putting the silver bullet in the beast's head. Martial creed Hunters know the value of intel gathering and preparation, but the focus of their Hunt is dealing with the quarry so that it can no longer prey on its victims. This can be everything from brutishly breaking down a door and taking the head off the undead to a nights-long stakeout, tracking the quarry's every movement, and finally pulling the trigger from a sniper's perch on a factory rooftop almost a kilometer away from the abandoned machine shop where the monster hides.

Given the broad attitude assumed by Martial Hunters, the playbook is huge, covering everything from "entering Transylvania" and eliminating targets to performing extensive reconnaissance beforehand and handling confidentiality breaches in the aftermath. The extensive outfitting and rigorous training many Martial Hunters bring to bear play a role in making sure their ops' outcomes conform to the cell's desires. Depending on the cell itself, that might be a nigh-military breach-and-clear or it might be a forensic breakthrough or even a public relations success. It all depends on the objective.

Many Martial strategies understandably eschew dealing with live targets, fearing mind control, emotional coercion, and supernatural violence, so almost all information comes to the Hunter at some level of remove. Supernatural creatures are complex and diverse, and what's true of some bat-faced vampire is different from what's known about this werewolf, let alone that werewolf — to say nothing of the factions that seemingly exist among the societies of the monsters, anyway.

Dangers

Perhaps more than any other creed type, the difference between Martial Hunters and extremists can come to the fore. The difference between Hunters whose Drive pushes them into the Martial creed and an extremist who draws fractured conclusions about the nature of the supernatural is enormous: The Driven Hunter knows that *vampires are real and preying upon the innocent*, while the radicalized individual may believe that "blankbodies are part of a sleeper plot to impose socialism on the heartland." The difference, of course, being that one of these is true (having in fact been personally experienced), and the other is baseless murder-board-style conjecture or deliberate misinformation.

As well, Martial Hunters are most likely to face a double threat of situations that make demands upon their personal lives. On the one hand, like all Hunters, the secret nature of the Hunt can fracture personal relationships and destabilize the circumstances of their lives. Further, the demands a frontline response can make on their personal lives rivals the significance of the supernatural in this regard. Whether they alienate their family because "I'm telling you, werewolves are real" or "We have to move again, 3,000 miles away to a boomtown near the tar sands," having a cause bigger than oneself calling the shots leaves many feeling as if they have no volition over their own lives.

SUGGESTED EDGES

Arsenal, Fleet, Ordnance, Artifact

COMMON DRIVES

Vengeance, Pride, Envy

DESPERATION DICE FIELDS

Physical conflict while on the Hunt (which need not be with the quarry itself, or even the supernatural).

Martial Archetypes

Dropout

The Dropout thought they knew what they were getting into, but everything got too deep, too fast.

They aced the mundane aspect of the UTR training, as they've always been physically fit and had a mind for procedure. But the first time on an op, it all felt wrong — like, literally felt wrong, walking sideways and seeing into and past corners, and all kinds of strange shit that the quarry must have done to their mind. Everyone else came out of it, or maybe never felt it as badly, but it stuck with the Dropout, and they never went into the field again before active-duty separation. Thing is, the Dropout knows that weird and vicious shit is still out there and still feels the need to do something about it… but what? How?

Engineer

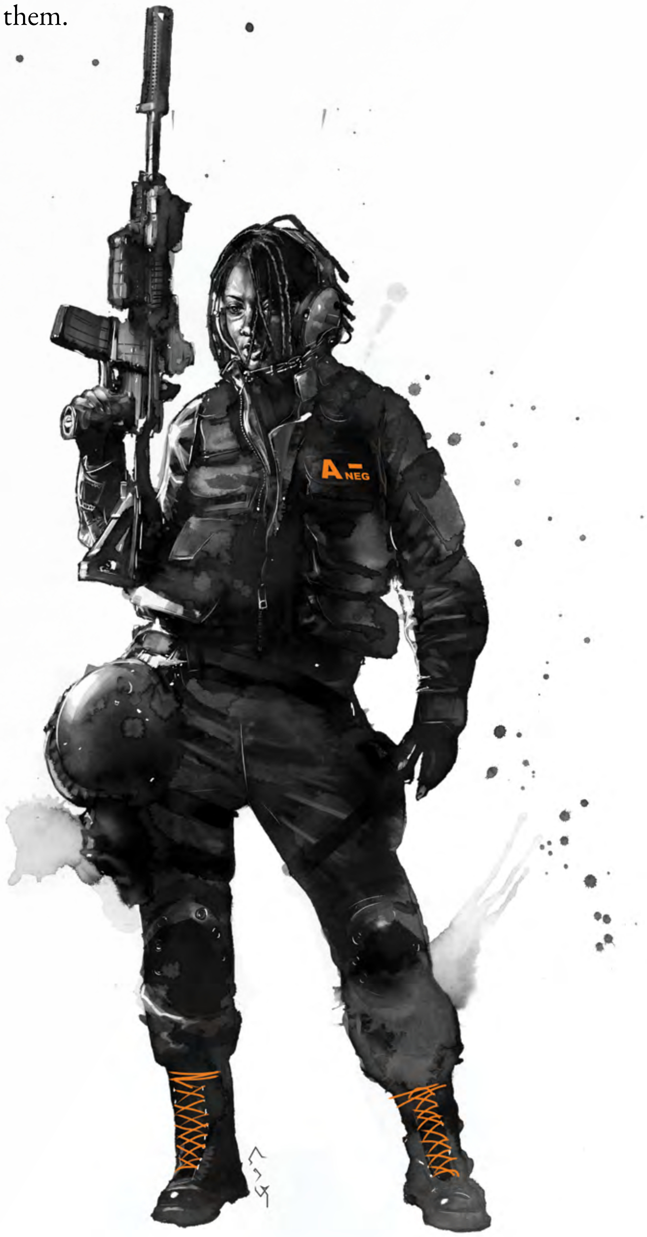
Every problem has a solution; that's how things work. One of the problems of that problem — the meta-problem, as it were — is that not every problem has a known solution. That's how the Engineer looks at things, at least. Kitted out with 50 kilos of Unusual Threat-hunting rig, from vee-identifying infrared drones to silver-jacketed flechettes, they're ready for a lot of the known problems. And when it comes to the unknown solutions? Well, they're going to cross that bridge when they come to it. Too many comrades-in-arms are dead or in convalescence to make giving up the answer.

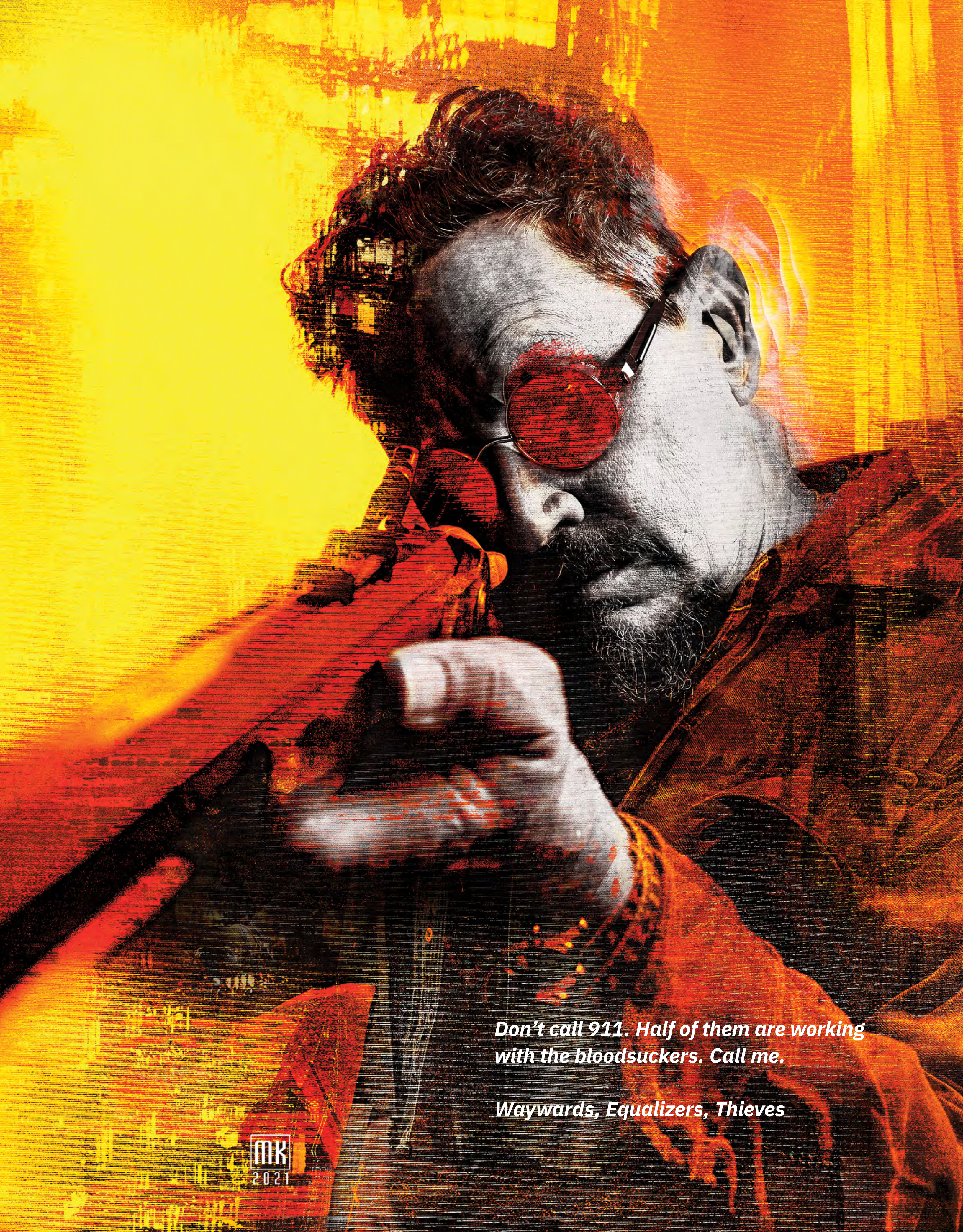
Burned Asset

The op was a bad idea to begin with and everyone knew it, especially the Burned Asset — codename "Bait." Bait was supposed to draw the target's attention, get taken back to the lair or the den or whatever the hairballs call their home base. Turns out there were more of them than the squad had known about, and when Bait's comms went dead, they knew they'd been compromised. Quick thinking and knowing how to steal a motorcycle saved Bait's ass, and ever since then, they've been on the run, cut off from HQ and looking over their shoulders for the closure they're sure is coming. The hairballs know Bait on sight, and maybe even by name, no longer just a potential victim and now little more than a Burned Asset.

Sharpshooter

Unusual Threats almost never go down in one shot. Whether they're using weird magic or they're just made of beyond-the-grave dead tissue, they remain standing, or at the very least, react to being shot in the goddamned head. That means a Sharpshooter's job on a UTR team is to shoot precisely, and repeatedly. It takes a huge amount of composure and split-second decision making to neutralize a target in accordance with their specialty. Humans, though… well, they do tend to go down in one shot. That's a mistake that led the Sharpshooter to withdraw from the force, and one they still haven't been able to recover from. The Hunt since then has been a journey of atonement and redemption-seeking for them.





Don’t call 911. Half of them are working with the bloodsuckers. Call me.

Waywards, Equalizers, Thieves

UNDERGROUND

Some Hunters start on the wrong side of societal custom — and that provides them with a unique perspective on how to take down the goddamned shaggy-ass night-haunts who are fucking with something they believe belongs to them. For these Hunters, conventional methods are either unavailable or undesirable.

Hunters of the Underground creed oppose the occult through awareness of countercultures, proximity to the supernatural through criminal enterprise, or through subterfuge and sabotage. With a creed that's part street justice, part rival outsider, Underground Hunters keep their ear to the ground among the segments of society where monsters often find easy, vulnerable prey, but where resistance can be stoked among those who know that official protection probably doesn't include them.

As well, the Underground doesn't just consist of urban areas. Underground Hunters might fund themselves with a bootleg booze operation in rural Appalachia, run with the anti-imperial resistance in Venezuela, or smuggle people to where they want to be across mountainous Balkan borders.

Hunters of the Underground creed might expect to organize a mob of vengeance-seeking dockworkers, improvise a flamethrower from chemicals that "fell off the back of a truck," spy on a rival racket that's obviously in bed with vampires, help protect a closed-lipped immigrant neighborhood, and liaise with the borough's criminal "patron."

Personality

The ranks of the Underground creed house a wide variety of Hunters, from those who were at the wrong place at the wrong time and witnessed something unnatural, to those who are, frankly, just fucking angry all the time, and burning down the lairs of monsters at least has some kind of positive outcome. Perhaps the sole common personality aspect among the Underground is that they've had enough — they've become Hunters to hunt.

Underground Hunters are often broadly skilled, taking a do-it-yourself attitude to everything they undertake in life. They may be optimistic dilettantes, the quickest learners at their offices, or shifty-eyed doomsday preppers, but they take great pride in being able to handle it themselves without calling in a specialist, no matter what "it" is (and often to varying degrees of success in the solution).

Some amount of the Underground personality is a cynical eye toward not just the orgs, but in prevailing social structures that comprise the status quo. Whether it's a desire to tear down the socioeconomics that create the liminal spaces of poverty and desperation where monsters thrive, or a desire to use the system against itself with criminal (but not necessarily malign) intent, the Underground Hunter knows that nobody's looking out for them and their kind except themselves and their cell.

Tactics

As befits the resourceful creed outlook, the collective tactics of the Underground are a grab-bag of what works. Despite its preference for immediate action, the Underground creed doesn't see much value in hurling itself at enemies unknown — that's a good way to get dead, fast, or, worse, end up in some monster's unholy host.

But every lost night might have a cost in lives, so Underground Hunters tend to run lean, reconnoitering the bare minimum to offset their human frailty. Individuals bring a great deal of their personal experience to the Hunt, and as such, Underground tactics run the gamut from poisonings to breaking-and-entering assassinations to organized-crime subterfuges.

It's about traps, tricks, and fighting dirty from the perspective of an Underground Hunter, as cells often have to run without the superior funding and firepower of established orgs. That means a lot of improvisation, a lot of misdirection, and a lot of working through proxies and lookouts. The same kids who hang out on the corner, keeping an eye out for cops, can just as well keep an eye out for a vampire's sedan or a weird shapeless thing that leaps across rooftops.

An Underground Hunter's lack of orthodoxy can be an advantage, certainly. Supernatural enemies can find the Underground to be unpredictable, since they're rarely using any sort of codified process or observable procedure outside their own idea of "best practices." The do-it-yourself nature of the Hunt is often the extent of the philosophy behind Underground Hunters — kill the monsters and keep them guessing. Which isn't to say the Underground is stupid, foolish, or uncoordinated. Rather, there's a forthrightness in their approach rivaled only by the Martial creed, just without the toe-to-toe going-at-it. Making monsters regretful is the point of the Hunt.

Dangers

Problem is, for Underground Hunters, a lack of long-term planning often leaves them unprepared for the response of the supernatural. The burst of passion that sustains them in the moment is no guarantee that they'll see future threats incoming. Many among the Underground enjoy a single initial success, effectively hitting their quarry for all they're worth out of the blue with the advantage of surprise because the target never knows that they've been under scrutiny. After that, though, if the quarry survives or had any comrades who can put two and two together after the assault, Underground Hunters often find themselves on their heels, having to play defense when all they had planned for was a single, overpowering offense.

Which often makes individuals of the Underground the shortest-lived of Hunters.

Followers of the Underground creed sometimes harden, losing compassion. In these cases, they see their opposition to monsters as a personal mythology that's in itself hypocritical, blowing hard about "protecting mankind" but despising those who haven't risen to the cause themselves.

SUGGESTED EDGES

Arsenal, Fleet, Improvised gear, Thwart the Unnatural

COMMON DRIVES

Envy, Oath, Vengeance

DESPERATION DICE FIELDS

Stealth and subterfuge in service of the Hunt.

Underground Archetypes

Button Man

Wetwork is the order of business for the Button Man, a killer-for-hire who takes contracts for whatever, uh, "extra-legal" entity wants to pay the cost, no questions asked, and done discreetly. No gunfire-in-the-streets nonsense, no fighting, all professional. Shit went sideways on a recent contract for the Bulgarians, though —

the creep they wanted dusted wasn't trafficking people for captive labor, but to eat them. The more the Button Man submerges into the horrific reality of the supernatural world, the more they're bothered by their own hypocrisy. What's the difference between a vampire and a protection racket, really? They're both blood-drinkers, one just more literally than the other.

Gallery Owner

There's a certain patron who always made the hair stand up on the back of the Gallery Owner's neck, a certain sort of off-putting vibe and almost animal predatory nature that they could identify within a few minutes of talking to them. They came to all the showings, flirted with a lot of the talent, and even had a few obvious dalliances. Then something happened (the Gallery Owner knew something was bound to happen eventually) and one of the up-and-comers just vanished. After the mystery's novelty wore off, the Gallery Owner noticed another creep at their shows and then another. And now it's time to trace the mystery back to its obvious source.

Smuggler

Getting things into or out of places, where someone doesn't want to be, is the smuggler's forte, and that's how they ran afoul of the supernatural in the first place. Turns out, two different gangs of bloodsuckers were looking for the same way to get people on tap. The same night the Smuggler discovered the occult actually exists was the same night they discovered they had a conscience. Since then, they've used their skills at getting a hold of some dangerous materiel to help equip the group they've thrown in with, each of which also knows the world's bloody little secret. They're a bit preachy, but that's a way better alternative to having some jacked-up Dracula drink you dry and cast your corpse aside.

Mole

It's a deep-cover operation. Officially, the Mole is on the payroll for a special division of an agency you know, charged with the observation and rooting out of a supernatural menace. That's all a front, though, and they're feeding information to their cell, letting the good guys — well, better guys, hopefully — know the movements of the org. The cell can then get the drop on whatever blankbody target the org is going after, and make a decision whether to take them down first, unless the intel indicates they'd be out of their league. It's a dangerous ruse for the Mole, but fuck it, these org teams aren't doing it out of the kindness of their hearts. ■

Saint
Michael

Chapter Two:

CHARACTERS

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.
— Howard Thurman

Your character is your "game piece" in the world of Hunter: The Reckoning, a distinct, individual monster hunter with their own goals and interpretations of their duty to humankind. This chapter helps you to define them, from the Traits that represent how they interact with the World of Darkness to the characteristics that make them different from the other players' characters, and from the allies and antagonists portrayed by the Storyteller.

It's also important to consider the role your character will have in their cell, working closely with other Hunters. For this reason, we recommend having the troupe create characters together, so that a sense of the collective emerges as well as a strong individual character identity.

Remember, too, that Hunter deals with mature themes and difficult subject matter — before you dive into telling your troupe's tales, take care to establish any boundaries necessary to ensure respectful play. See the Appendix on p. 274 for more information on this.

Character Creation Summary

Choose **Concept, Ambition, Desire**, and **Touchstones**

Choose **Creed** and **Drive**

Allocate Attributes

- Take one Attribute at 4; three Attributes at 3; four Attributes at 2; one Attribute at 1
- Record Health (Stamina + 3) and Willpower (Composure + Resolve)

Allocate Skills

- Choose a spread; see p. 61

Allocate Advantages

- 7 points of Advantages, 2 points of Flaws
- Choose Edges: 2 Edges and 1 Perk or 1 Edge and 2 Perks

Why and Who?

Hunters stand for something.

Some of your character's Traits will help you qualify what they believe, helping to express an understanding for why your character does what they do. Certain Traits also grant systemic reasons for advancing those causes and ways of dealing with the consequences they create.

Concept

Your character concept is like a pitch: a high-level hook, your character's "thing." "Monster-hunting soldier-of-fortune" or "drug-addled revenge-seeker" or "Edward Snowden, but he exposes supernatural malfeasance." If you know the Hunter setting, you might have a concept that ties into a creed, Drive, Edge, etc.: "massively entitled Underground capo" or "generous Faithful-creed imam."

As you figure out more about the story and setting, your concept might shift or come into better focus. Ask your fellow players and the Storyteller for ideas and suggestions if you're stuck. Remember, too, that it's cool to not know things — Hunter is about figuring shit out and dealing with it with the help of your cell.

Think about the cell taking shape, and the other players' characters you'll be hunting quarry with. Come up with concepts that play interestingly off those cellies. If your fellow player Stephanie creates a roadhouse bouncer with a political conscience, perhaps you create a real-estate developer whose assets are tied up in historical sites they plan to modernize at profit.

It's your responsibility to create a character who works with the cell or at least doesn't sabotage the group or the game. That said, conflicts are bound to arise between Hunters, and those conflicts make for interesting stories — your character and Stephanie's probably don't see things entirely the same way, for example.

Decide why your Hunter joined up with their cell, and why they stay together. Do they have an immediate common enemy, or a mutual change they want to see happen in their community? Are they mystically or politically connected? "Complementary creed or Drives" works perfectly well, especially if you're new to Hunter. More robust and character-driven answers will take shape the more you're familiar with the game, as well as through play.

Ambition and Desire

Everybody wants something, Hunters included. The Ambition and Desire Traits represent this systemically. Ambition and Desire are related but not identical. Think of Ambition as a long-term goal: an aspiration, a life's intention. By contrast, Desires are more immediate: short-term wishes for comfort, acceptance, or gratification.

Importantly, they're separate from Drive. Ambition and Desire are what a Hunter wants from life as a person. Drive is specifically their motivation for pursuing the supernatural. Having a well-realized Ambition and Desire helps your Hunter become a more complete person, something other than just a killer of killers.

Ambition

A character's Ambition keeps them acting and moving both every day and in the chronicle. It provides motivation for the player and story hooks for the Storyteller.

An Ambition must be measurable in game terms ("My Ambition is to become a master of Medicine") or a concrete achievement in the world of the chronicle ("My Ambition is to have a home I can safely call my own"). An Ambition is not something vague like "end racism" or "achieve world peace," but instead focuses on something specific, like "expose the corruption inside the Society of St. Leopold" or "be elected to the city council." If an Ambition is unlikely to happen or would end the chronicle if achieved, it can still provide rich story juice — it only needs to be theoretically achievable.

If a character achieves their Ambition and the chronicle continues, the player should decide on a new Ambition, ideally one that has emerged during play or one that follows on the realization that their first Ambition left something undone or incomplete.

At the end of a session in which the character has actively worked toward their Ambition, they recover one point of Aggravated Willpower damage.

Desire

Desire reflects less than lifelong Ambition, but more than momentary wants. Each session, a character can select a Desire or keep their unfulfilled Desire from the previous session. Once per session, when the character definitively acts to further or accomplish their Desire, they may immediately recover one point of spent or damaged Superficial Willpower. Since Desires change so rapidly, you don't need to write them on your character sheet (though a space is provided). Just write your current Desire on an index card or sticky note where both you and the Storyteller can see and remember it. This mechanic intentionally provides players with an incentive for character proactivity rather than passively waiting for the Storyteller to prompt them. Thus, a good Desire connects in some way to the outside world. One rule of thumb: If it doesn't involve someone or

something named on the Relationship Map (see p.84), it's not worth considering as a Desire. By that metric, "I want to drive a cherry Maserati" or "I want to have a normal date" fail as Desires, but "I want to steal that fucking vampire's cherry Maserati" or "I want to date the GIGN agent's sister" make excellent Desires. The Storyteller should judge whether Desires involving fellow players' characters fall under the spirit of encouraging substantial interaction, especially where they concern boundaries players may have with one another.

Touchstones

Hunters have a complex relationship with the oblivious majority of humankind and an even more complicated relationship with their own nature, with their knowledge of the existence of some of the World of Darkness' most fearsome fundamental secrets. Even after learning of the existence of the supernatural, Hunters retain connections to "unenlightened" friends, lovers, family, and home. Few Hunters sever all contact with their past, and those who do often still secretly cherish the memory of what once seemed to be an ordinary life.

For Hunters, the justification for the Reckoning and the Hunt becomes concrete in other people. These are the Touchstones who help them stay grounded, stay empathetic, and stay in touch with their communities or even just themselves.

For Hunters, Touchstones are always people. These Touchstones have some personal connection to the Hunter and most probably have no knowledge of the supernatural. The relationship can be complex or simple or even one-sided. An individual Touchstone might be a spouse, a parent, an unrequited love observed from afar so as not to terrify them with the complicated nature of the Hunter's calling. It might be a best friend, or an influential individual from the Hunter's past. In some chronicles, a Storyteller might even permit the ghost of a person once important to the Hunter who met an untimely demise (and who still has unfinished matters keeping them "present," as it were).

Over the course of the chronicle, these Touchstones may be threatened and may even die. That's the point, though: They're the people the Hunter is fighting for, on a very individual, personal level. Touchstones are important because they connect Hunters to the world around them. A Hunter with no Touchstones cannot regain Willpower injury or expenditures (see p. 123), and is considered to be permanently in Despair (see p. 128).

Pick one to three Touchstones during character creation. More Touchstones means more risk, but also signifies a greater connection to the world and the people the Hunter loves.

A Hunter may replace a lost Touchstone or even replace a living one, but should do so in consultation with the Storyteller. Touchstones shouldn't be replaced on a whim; they're individuals with whom the Hunter has a deep connection or meaningful relationship.

EXAMPLES:

Lillian's player chooses her eldest daughter as her Touchstone, who turned her back on her mother once the stress and weirdness of Lillian's chosen life became too much to make excuses for.

Omar's player chooses a childhood friend his same age as a Touchstone. Omar and his friend grew apart when they were younger and Omar moved away, but he wants to reconnect with his friend, to give him a personal purpose in the struggles he deals with as a Hunter.

Creed and Drive

Every Hunter has a creed and a Drive. Think of creed as their outlook — how they hunt the supernatural. Drive is why they Hunt, their motivation. Here's a quick summary, for the sake of character creation. Much more information is available about the creeds starting on p. 31. More information about Drives starts on p. 129.

Creeds

Entrepreneurial: Bold innovations and experimental approaches

Faithful: Belief in higher powers and a divinely informed worldview

Inquisitive: Gathering intel and understanding the quarry

Martial: Attacking the supernatural via arms and tactics

Underground: Guile, subterfuge, and knowing the right people

Drives

Curiosity: What do monsters do, and why?

Vengeance: Settle a score with the supernatural

Oath: A promise made binds the Hunter to honor it

Greed: Take the ill-gotten gains the monsters have stolen

Pride: The world belongs to humans, not the supernatural

Envy: Join the night or die trying

Atonement: Make up for aiding the supernatural in the past

Attributes and Skills

When a Hunter wants to smooth-talk their way past warehouse security, put the hurt on the gang of crazed cultists pursuing them, or dig through the ruins of a burned-down mansion, they use both their natural Attributes and learned Skills in an attempt to succeed. Even when lacking any special training, a Hunter can use their innate Physical, Social, or Mental traits to attempt the task at hand.

Attribute and Skill ratings range from 1 (poor) through 2 (average) to 5 (peak ability), though ratings of 0 are possible. For an Attribute, 0 indicates actual debility. For a Skill, 0 merely signifies a lack of training or experience. A Skill of 3 might indicate veteran prowess, a Skill of 4 means an expert level; someone with Skill 5 is likely the best in the city or even in that part of the world. Most people get by perfectly well and even make a living with 2 in a frequently used Skill.

Attributes

A character's Attributes indicate their raw potential, the basic ability to interact with the world and others in it.

Take one Attribute at 4; three Attributes at 3; four Attributes at 2; one Attribute at 1.

Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes measure a character's general strength, agility, and stamina. Strong, quick, or tough Hunters need not look muscle-bound, graceful, or meaty. Some of the most lethal Hunters may appear rangy or lean rather than jacked.

STRENGTH

Strength governs how much you can lift, how hard you can punch, and how much force you can command your body to exert.

(The rough amount you can deadlift without an Attribute test appears in parentheses below.)

●	You can easily crush a beer can. (20 kg: a Christmas tree, a stop sign)
●●	You are physically average. (45 kg: a toilet)
●●●	You might be able to break open a wooden door. (115 kg: a large human, an empty coffin, a refrigerator)
●●●●	You are a prime physical specimen, perhaps with very visible musculature. (180 kg: a full coffin, an empty dumpster)
●●●●●	You are a true powerhouse and can likely break open a metal fire door, tear open a chain-link fence, or snap open a chained gate. (250 kg: a motorcycle, a piano)

DEXTERITY

Dexterity governs your agility and grace, how swiftly you move out of the way of incoming violence, and how much fine motor control you possess when up against the clock.

●	You're a bit clumsy; balance and dodging are a challenge.
●●	Your sprint is natural, and sometimes you appear graceful.
●●●	Your agility is impressive, and your coordination is as good as any trained amateur.
●●●●	You could excel at acrobatics and move in a way few humans can.
●●●●●	Your movements are liquid and hypnotic, almost superhuman.

STAMINA

Your physical resistance: Stamina absorbs physical harm, such as a speeding bullet or a werewolf's slashing claws, and lets you persevere through hazards and arduous effort.

Your Stamina + 3 equals your Health (see p. 60).

●	Even lesser exertions make you winded.
●●	You can take a beating, but consider suing for peace.
●●●	Several days of hard hiking with a backpack is no problem for you.
●●●●	You could win a marathon or take copious amounts of pain, at least physically.
●●●●●	You never even break a sweat, a cardio virtuoso.

Social Attributes

As social creatures, humans have great cause to use interpersonal skills, and their cultures are the richer for it. Social Attributes determine first impressions, as well as the character's ability to charm, inspire, and motivate people. In addition to impressions made on physical individuals, certain spiritual or otherwise incorporeal creatures also respond well to social acumen — when some point of relatedness can be found with them.

CHARISMA

Charisma measures your natural charm, grace, and sex appeal. If you have it, it draws people to you. Charisma doesn't depend on good looks, which are their own Merit (See "Looks," p. 70).

●	You can speak clearly, though few people care to listen.
●●	Generally likeable, you may even have friends.
●●●	People trust you implicitly, and you easily make friends.
●●●●	You possess significant personal appeal and draw followers readily.
●●●●●	Pure animal magnetism, that's you.

MANIPULATION

Manipulation is your ability to convince others of your point of view, lie convincingly, and walk away after duping a mark without anyone being any the wiser.

●	As long as you stay honest, you can convince people to do what you want.
●●	Your ability to deceive surpasses the will of the weak-willed and simple-minded.
●●●	You never have to pay full price for anything.
●●●●	You could be a cult leader or a successful lawyer.

●●●●●	You could convince people of utter nonsense like “trickle-down economics” or “corporations are people”

COMPOSURE

Composure allows you to remain calm, to command your emotions, and to put others at ease despite anxiety. It also represents your ability to stay cool in everything from firefights to intimate encounters.

Your Composure + Resolve equals your Willpower (see p. 60).

●	The slightest insult or confrontation raises your hackles.
●●	You can subdue your baser instincts in most non-hostile situations.
●●●	Others look to you for guidance when the blood spatter hits the fan.
●●●●	You can effortlessly bluff at cards and negotiate multimillion-dollar deals without any tells.
●●●●●	Things would have been different had you captained the Titanic.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes represent the capacity for learning, intuition, and focus. High Mental Attributes might indicate native genius, superb education, or a burning desire to know why. Low Mental Attributes might derive from naiveté, ignorance, or just incapacity at thinking. After discovering that the supernatural exists, some Hunters may experience a mental awakening that corresponds with the emergence of their Drive.

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence measures your ability to reason, research, and apply logic. You can recall and analyze information from books or from your senses. No puzzle or mystery can elude the truly intelligent.

●	You can read and write competently, though some terms confound you.
●●	You are smart enough to realize your limitations.
●●●	You are enlightened, able to piece together clues without difficulty.
●●●●	You’re not only knowledgeable, you have theories about how people come to know things and can improve that process.
●●●●●	Genius is a humble term for the depths and range of your intellect.

WITS

Wits indicate thinking quickly and reacting correctly on little information. “You hear a sound” is Wits; so is “The infosec consultant isn’t making eye contact with you as she tells you her account of the break-in at the dam.” Wits let you anticipate a poltergeist’s ambush or answer the IAO goon right away, instead of thinking of the best response the next night.

●	You get the point eventually, but it may take some explaining.
●●	You can bet the odds in poker or apply the emergency brakes in time. Usually.
●●●	You can analyze a situation and quickly work out the best escape route.
●●●●	You’re never caught flatfooted and always come up with a smart riposte.
●●●●●	You think and respond more quickly than most people can comprehend.

RESOLVE

Resolve provides focus and determination, and measures concentration and mental fortitude. Resolve powers all-night watches and blocks out distractions, especially in a modern, technological society rife with incentives to shift your attention to them.

Your Composure + Resolve equals your Willpower (see p. 60).

●	You have minimal focus for all but the most pressing things.
●●	You can settle in for the long haul, as long as it’s not too long.
●●●	Distracting you takes more effort than most other people want to spend.

●●●● You can brute-force your way to a deduction past any obstacles.

●●●●● You can think in a gunfight or patrol the entirety of the perimeter and then clean up every shell casing or spilled bit of gore.

Health

Health measures a character's physical well-being, such as how much violence they have endured, an illness that may be debilitating them, or trauma from a fall. Health is a tracker, with both a maximum rating and a temporary pool of points.

A character's maximum Health rating equals their Stamina + 3. As such, a character's Health increases if their Stamina increases. Additional Health boxes cannot (normally) be purchased with experience points (see p. 82) or during character creation.

A Hunter's Health will vary greatly during a chronicle, story, and even single scenes — the Hunt poses frequent physical threats. For more information on Health, damage, healing, and regeneration, see p. 121–123.

Willpower

Willpower measures a character's confidence, mental stability, and competence at overcoming unfavorable odds. Like Health, Willpower is a tracker, with both a maximum rating and a temporary pool of points.

A character's maximum Willpower rating equals their Composure + Resolve. You cannot buy extra Willpower either during character creation or with experience points, but you can get more through increased Composure and/or Resolve.

A character's Willpower pool likely fluctuates a great deal during the course of a story or chronicle. It is spent every time a player uses a Willpower point to enable their character to do something extraordinary, to withstand unwanted impulses, or to resist supernatural mind control and other invasiveness. Social conflict can also drain Willpower.

For more information on spending Willpower, see p. 117.

For more information on Willpower damage, see p. 123.

Skills

Skills are the Traits used to describe your general fields of competency and what you've learned to do.

Whereas Attributes represent your raw potential, Skills represent the ways you've learned to use that potential. You may not need anything but brute strength to smash through a door — but if you're trying to use sheer muscle power to force an engine part into place without breaking anything, you'd better know something about mechanics.

Skills are spread across the Physical, Social, and Mental categories, similar to Attributes. Each Skill typically covers a broad range of aptitudes.

When rolling dice, you may pair a Skill with an appropriate Attribute, in order to properly depict the combination of potential and know-how that's necessary for getting things done. (See "Dice Pools" on p. 111)

Pick one Skill distribution.

Jack of all trades: One Skill at 3; eight Skills at 2; ten Skills at 1

Balanced: Three Skills at 3; five Skills at 2; seven Skills at 1

Specialist: One Skill at 4; three Skills at 3; three Skills at 2; three Skills at 1

Take one Skill specialty. Add free specialties to Academics, Craft, Performance, and Science Skills.

Skill Specialties

Characters receive one free specialty during character creation to apply to any Skill, and can buy further specialties with experience points.

A Specialty represents a particular expertise in one aspect of a Skill. This is a field where a character may be especially practiced, have a personal aptitude, or be engaged in deeper study.

If the Storyteller decides a character is attempting a task that falls under their Specialty, the player gains one extra die for their dice pool. A character may apply only one of their Specialties to a single roll.

Each Skill includes sample Specialties, but this list is not exhaustive. Players can consult the Storyteller to develop other Specialties that more precisely model their characters. For most Skills, a character can have only as many Specialties as they have dots in the Skill.

Storytellers should not allow Specialties that are so broad that they always, or even mostly, apply to the uses of a Skill. Specific martial arts styles, for example, should not be treated as Specialties of Brawl: Since any use of Brawl could be a Muay Thai strike, taking Muay Thai as a Specialty would effectively equal a free extra die in every Brawl test.

Four Skills come with one automatic specialty when acquired: Craft, Academics, Science, and Performance.

Physical Skills

Physical Skills depend entirely, or at least in large part, on physical control, aptitude, or effort.

ATHLETICS

Athletics describes an aptitude for competitive physical performance, whether against another athlete or against the parameters of a sporting-type challenge.

Athletics allows you to outpace someone in pursuit, leap out of the way of an oncoming car, and climb and swim with vigor. A character can use Athletics in place of any Physical combat Skill in a conflict roll, but in that case, they never inflict any hits on their opponent, no matter how many successes they roll. (See "Dodging" on p. 119.)

●	You were always attentive in gym class and you still have a spring in your step.
●●	You've had some training, or you have a remarkable knack with sporting-themed physical activity.
●●●	You are fit as a fiddle and excel at sports.
●●●●	An exemplary athlete.
●●●●●	Olympic records await you; only a very few peak humans can achieve what you can.

Specialties: Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing, Endurance, Jumping, Parkour, Swimming, Throwing

BRAWL

Brawl enables characters to hit their target when they swing with fist, boot, or chokehold. As long as you have no weapon in hand, the attack constitutes a brawl, from graceful martial arts to drunken fistfights.

●	That one kid who always had a black eye — but you should've seen the other kid.
●●	You received some training in hitting someone hard and accurately.
●●●	You more than hold your own in a scrap.
●●●●	You either received institutional training, or you have learned the hard way in numerous combative escapades.

●●●●● You could win MMA championships even without the use of your Drive.

Specialties: Animals, Armed Humans, Bar Fights, Fucking Up Vampires, Grappling, Sporting Combat, Unarmed Humans

CRAFT

Craft broadly encompasses artistry, creation of items and utilities from the beautiful to the functional, and arts and crafts from throwing pottery all the way to architecture and interior design.

When you take this Skill, you get a free specialty. Unlike most Skills, you can have more specialties in Craft than you have dots.

● You are an amateur, but you know what you're doing.

●● Your craftsmanship is admired for its functionality.

●●● Your creations can be beautiful or horrifying, but their intent is always clear.

●●●● Your skill is highly respected among those who are aware of it, whether they are supernatural or mundane themselves.

●●●●● You are a virtuoso, capable of visionary breakthroughs in your chosen form.

Specialties: Carpentry, Carving, Design, Painting, Sculpting, Sewing, Weaponsmithing

DRIVING

Anyone can learn to drive a car. In most cases, simply driving isn't extremely difficult. Just driving to the store or even cross-country isn't notably risky.

The Driving Skill connotes ability to drive fast and safely under adverse conditions or in stressful situations: to drive off-road, speed away from ambushes, win street races, and escape from pursuit with org flunkies, police, or security forces.

● You are a cautious driver, unlikely to make any mistakes.

●● You can put your foot down without much fear of an accident, provided visibility is good.

●●● You have won car chases, worthy of a reputation in certain circles.

●●●● You could be a stunt driver; few can match your skill and knowledge.

●●●●● Wanna race for pinks?

Specialties: All-Terrain Vehicles, Evasion, Motorcycles, Street Racing, Stunts, Tailing, Trucks, Vintage Models

FIREARMS

Hunters use Firearms often; they can come close to evening the odds against the quarry, if the cell gets a bunch of other operational details right. This Skill comprises familiarity with small arms from holdout pistols to assault rifles. It also includes other trigger-operated weapons, such as crossbows and shoulder-fired rocket-propelled grenades. Finally, it includes cleaning, unjamming, and rapidly reloading such weapons.

● You've fired a gun a few times, at the range or in less-formal circumstances.

●● You know (and know how) to keep your weapon clean, take it apart, and reassemble it.

●●●	You've probably exchanged fire with hostiles, and come out the other side.
●●●●	You can handle trick shots, called shots, running shots — really anything ending in a gunshot.
●●●●●	If it's in range, you can hit it dead-center.

Specialties: Crossbows, Gun Dealing, Gunsmithing, Handloading Ammunition, Quick-Draw, Sniper, Trick Shooting

Storytellers should discourage specialties in "Combat Shooting," "Pistols," or even "Glock 17s." A specialty in Your Personal Signature Weapon might be allowable, because if you take your personally engraved Colt balanced to your personal grip to every gunfight, you're much more likely to drop it, have it stolen, or have its ballistic fingerprint connect you to a series of murders.

LARCENY

This Skill entails familiarity with the tools and techniques for picking locks, planting bugs, deactivating standard burglar and car alarms, manual forgery, hot-wiring automobiles, or even safecracking, as well as countless forms of breaking and entering. Characters also use it for setting up "unbeatable" security systems or deducing how and where systems failed in a break-in. Doesn't matter which side of the law you're on, Larceny relates to the doing of dirty deeds as well as the countermeasures.

These days, most high-end security systems feature computer controls, video surveillance, or electronic alarms, so they might also involve the Technology Skill to defeat.

●	You can pick a simple lock or a careless pocket.
●●	You can hotwire a car or shoplift with ease.
●●●	You can identify the locations of security cameras and alarms the better to bypass them.
●●●●	You can defeat a keypad, retool an ID card, or crack a safe.
●●●●●	You can get into — or out of — the vault of a multinational bank.

Specialties: Alarms, Forgery, Grand Theft Auto, Housebreaking, Lockpicking, Pickpocket, Safecracking, Security Analysis

MELEE

Use Melee to wield handheld weapons such as knives, chains, and baseball bats with prowess. Feel free to improvise with a length of rebar or, hell, maybe a manhole cover, if you can swing it.

●	You can swing a bat or blade and mostly hit the people you intend to.
●●	Your clear competence with a weapon in hand should give attackers pause.
●●●	You know when to use Thibault against Capo Ferro, but keep your Agrippa at the ready.
●●●●	The fools brought a gun to your knife fight.
●●●●●	Your weapon moves like an extension of you, instinctively.

Specialties: Axes, Chains, Clubs, Fencing, Disarming Blows, Garrotes, Improvised Weapons, Knives, Stakes, Swords

STEALTH

Stealth allows a character to shadow a target, whether in an urban environment or in remote wilds. They benefit from the ability to spy, sneak, and blend in with crowds when needed.

●	Spotting you under the cover of darkness or in camouflage proves difficult.
●●	You can sneak by casual observers and stalk unknowing victims without earning any attention.
●●●	You evade patrolling guards, moving softly and hiding easily.
●●●●	Your subtle, silent passage could make you the bane of creatures born as prey.
●●●●●	Your quarry doesn't even know there's a "there" when you're there, let alone your presence.

Specialties: Ambushes, Crowds, Disguise, Hiding, Shadowing, Silent Movement, Urban, Wilderness

SURVIVAL

Survival conveys the ability to exist in the wild and under adverse conditions. Navigating by the stars, establishing a makeshift shelter, and noticing the spoors of prey and predators are all part of it, as is foraging for food and seeking cover. Whether on city streets or across trackless wastes, the intent is the same.

●	You know the trails and wilderness of your immediate locale.
●●	You spend more time outdoors than inside, and you can track anyone who possesses a lesser degree of your craft.
●●●	You can subsist when denied "home," setting traps and building shelter as necessary.
●●●●	You can thrive on the fly like the true predator you are.
●●●●●	Your hardiness is a lesson to all.

Specialties: Desert, Hunting, Jungle, Tracking, Traps, Shelters, Urban Exploration, Woodlands

Social Skills

Social Skills operate in the space between people and among cohorts. Although they depend on your ability and your personality, the other party's response contributes something to the effort. Without skill on your part, that response tends to be negative.

ANIMAL KEN

Animal Ken allows you to manage, pacify, and even befriend animals. This Skill allows you to predict how an animal might react in a given situation, train a domesticated creature, or even try to calm or enrage animals. Without this Skill, most wild creatures pointedly avoid humankind. Note, though, that using Animal Ken won't allow you to flawlessly command animals, nor is their response instantaneous — Animal Ken is a Skill, not a supernatural power in and of itself.

Animal Ken also makes for familiarity with various animal spoor, remains, and even behavior. "Something bigger than your average wolf must have made these bite marks."

●	Animals shy away from you but will not bolt or snap.
●●	Animals are docile around you, acting as if you aren't there, unless you build a rapport with them.
●●●	Animals treat you as if you were a familiar, friendly owner, unless provoked to do otherwise.
●●●●	You draw animals into your orbit. Few attacking creatures maintain their aggression.
●●●●●	You can predict an animal's feelings and thoughts, and they can feel and act on yours.

Specialties: Attack Training, Cats, Dogs, Falconry, Horses, Pacification, Rats, Snakes, Stunt Training

ETIQUETTE

Etiquette is the ability to identify and respond to the social conventions in the current scene, set new protocols, and please everyone around with your good graces. This isn't necessarily all tea rooms and hierarchies of royal address — it's all forms of respecting customs, from the tattoo parlor to the executive boardroom.

●	You know the conversational difference between uses of "get the fuck out of here."
●●	You know the rules of etiquette in all the popular nightspots.
●●●	You impress others with your command of politeness, deference, and grace.
●●●●	Your behavior sets trends, especially if you do something to buck the norm of etiquette.
●●●●●	You're Beau Brummel when you need to be, but could get away with being Lord Byron.

Specialties: Celebrities, Corporate, Downtown, Org Protocol, One-Percenter, Secret Society

INSIGHT

Insight grants you the ability to interpret body language, note subtle cues in expression and tone, and determine truth from lies. It also allows you to perceive and understand the motives behind another's actions.

●	You can see straight through hollow boasts.
●●	You pick up on the hidden emotion between humans.
●●●	It's hard to put one over on you; you're almost never the mark.
●●●●	You are a veritable lie detector. Only the most mendacious can slip one by you.
●●●●●	People are as books to you, and they are printed in large type, easy to read.

Specialties: Ambitions, Desires, Discerning Lies, Emotions, Empathy, Interrogation, Motives, Phobias, Vices

INTIMIDATION

Intimidation is the power to bully, coerce, threaten, and strongarm your way to a social victory. Hunters who rely on Intimidation never hesitate to crush the wills — and occasionally the bones — of their quarry or the quarry's minions.

●	Your words are cudgels.
●●	You can push your way around most humans without difficulty.
●●●	Your swagger and cruel behavior have earned you a reputation.
●●●●	You're far past mere physical threats.
●●●●●	Even Dracula may step back as you loom.

Specialties: Extortion, Insults, Interrogation, Physical Coercion, Staredowns, Veiled Threats, Wordless

LEADERSHIP

Leadership grants you the ability to lead a crowd, command a detachment, boost the morale of your supporters, or subdue a riot. As the cell accumulates successes, so, too, rises expectation, and veteran Hunters might be expected to lead those of humbler experience.

●	You have led informal clubs before and can organize individuals of like mind.
●●	Your voice makes itself heard in the cell, and even your superiors sometimes listen.
●●●	You can command on the battlefield and lead your soldiers into death.
●●●●	You can inspire the injured and dying to action, so long as you are there to lead them.
●●●●●	Your presence could rouse an entire org to hurl itself into the fires of Hell.

Specialties: Command, Down But Not Out, Guerilla Rally, Inspiration, Oratory, Team Dynamics

PERFORMANCE

Performance covers a range of arts, from dance to poetry and comedy to melodrama. You may be a gifted performer in your own right or simply an enthusiastic student of the arts.

When you take this Skill, you get a free specialty.

●	You are the life of the party, but you wouldn't take your act on stage.

●●	You have performed for others, to mixed reviews. Some love you, others have no opinion.
●●●	You are an expert student of your chosen performing art.
●●●●	You perform your practiced art form stunningly, winning over even the most curmudgeonly critics.
●●●●●	You play the audience's emotions as masterfully as any instrument.

Specialties: Comedy, Dance, Drama, Drums, Guitar, Keyboards, Poetry, Public Speaking, Rap, Singing, Violin, Wind Instruments

In theory, the Storyteller could break these specialties down endlessly — can even a five-dot pop star also perform as a coloratura soprano and a country crooner? But in practice, unless the whole chronicle happens in a musical or theatrical milieu, allow broader specialties.

PERSUASION

Use Persuasion when trying to convince others to see your point of view — or that you know what's best for them. Skilled persuaders make effective arguments and organize their positions well, but can also play on victims' emotions and appeal to peers' reason. Persuasion applies in law courts and around campfires, in boardrooms, barrooms, and bedrooms.

●	You can sell to a motivated buyer.
●●	You can always swing a discount or get on the inside track of the latest gossip.
●●●	You can always figure out a compromise in a given conflict.
●●●●	"I mean, sure, the law as written says that, but…".
●●●●●	You may be the original silver-tongued devil.

Specialties: Bargaining, Fast Talk, Interrogation, Legal Argument, Negotiation, Nonstop Bullshit Technique, Rhetoric

STREETWISE

Streetwise enables characters to talk the language and negotiate the societies of the streets and the underworld. You can understand code words and slang, interpret graffiti tags, and emulate gang signs. Streetwise doesn't inherently require criminality, but they do seem to overlap in many situations…

●	You know where to buy weed that isn't oregano.
●●	You know which gangs operate in the area, including their colors and rivalries. You may have your own graffiti tag.
●●●	You can tell the good shit from bad, score guns, and blend in seamlessly with streetlife.
●●●●	When someone connected says "I know a guy," you're who they know.
●●●●●	You can hire, orchestrate, or arrange almost any criminal activity anywhere in your city.

Specialties: Arms Dealing, Black Market, Bribery, Drugs, Fence Stolen Goods, Gangs, Graffiti, Sex Trade, The Best Parties

SUBTERFUGE

Subterfuge is the art of lying convincingly, pressing an agenda, and making good excuses for bad actions. This Skill defines your talent for intrigue, secrets, and double-dealing. Subterfuge can also be used for seduction and imitating responses expected of someone serving the supernatural.

●	You can tell believable, simple lies.
●●	You can hustle naive people, old and young, into giving you their things.
●●●	You can operate on multiple levels, telling lies intended to be uncovered to bolster other lies.
●●●●	You can operate endlessly in deep cover: a perfect double agent. Perhaps you are!
●●●●●	Nobody believes you have even a single dot in Subterfuge.

Specialties: Bluff, Impeccable Lies, Innocence, Passing As a Ghoul (maybe you once were one…), The Long Con, Seduction

Mental Skills

Mental Skills depend almost entirely on specialized knowledge, as well as on the character's core intellectual gifts.

ACADEMICS

Academics reflects understanding, higher education, and ability to research fields within the humanities and the liberal arts. Historical study, for instance, is hardly "just academic" when considering the cultural breadth of the creeds and their localized appearances among mortal societies since as long as Hunters have had Drives.

When you take this Skill, you get a free specialty. For foreign languages, use the Linguistics Merit (p. 70).

●	Basic primary and secondary education; a night class at community college
●●	Basic university education or tutelage from a standard mentor; a four-year degree
●●●	Advanced university education or dedicated personal tuition; an excellent four-year degree, a doctorate
●●●●	Advanced specialized study beyond university, learning into subjects few understand
●●●●●	Refined and advanced scholarship, likely to be sought out for advice and tutelage

Specialties: African Literature, Architecture, History of Art, History (specific field or period), Journalism, Philosophy, Research, Teaching, Telugu Film Studies, Theology

AWARENESS

Awareness handles your perceptions. The hair may stand up on the back of your neck before the werewolf erupts from the shadows, you may spy a key dropped in the trash, or sense a lingering perfume.

●	You have a history of knowing when something is out of place.
●●	You can spot erratic or pattern behavior in an individual.
●●●	You can see through most disguises and sense concealed dangers or hidden clues.
●●●●	Even when you are distracted, few things are beyond your notice.
●●●●●	Your senses are preternatural.

Specialties: Ambushes, Camouflage, Concealed Objects, Hearing, Instincts, Sight, Traps, Wilderness

FINANCE

Finance allows you to identify trends in the market, invest well, manipulate stock, and know when a fall is coming. It also allows you to assess — and trace — the wealth of others and broker financial deals. You can generally appraise art, property, or any other non-criminal good.

●	You can run a business and keep books.
●●	You can manage a corporate division or bank branch; you file impeccably plausible tax returns.
●●●	Thanks to international trading, you make a fine broker on foreign stock exchanges.
●●●●	Investment banks follow your financial lead. You have no trouble concealing fraud.
●●●●●	You can make money do anything, including stick to your pockets — or crash countries.

Specialties: Appraisal, Banking, Black Markets, Corporate Finance, Currency Manipulation, Fine Art, Forensic Accounting, Modern Monetary Theory, Money Laundering, Stock Market

INVESTIGATION

Investigation allows you to unravel cases of mundane and mysterious means, spot clues, interpret them, and trace missing persons. Hunters find this Skill especially useful when connecting the dots between immediate tragedies and the supernatural entities behind them.

●	You love a good mystery novel and fancy yourself an amateur sleuth.
●●	You have a firm knowledge of criminology and the signature telltale signs of greater malfeasance.

●●● You are, or could be, a detective by trade. Nothing in a crime scene escapes you.

●●●● You've been consulted by local law enforcement when unknown parties have risked the community's safety.

●●●●● You set riddles for others and live an enigmatic existence few can penetrate.

Specialties: Criminology, Deduction, Forensics, Missing Persons, Murder, Paranormal Mysteries, Racketeering, Traffic Analysis

MEDICINE

Medicine allows you to give health aid to people or animals who need it and diagnose causes of death or sickness in a victim. It also allows you to use medical equipment, prescribe drugs, and stanch (or encourage) rapid blood flow.

Characters use Medicine to heal Aggravated Health damage (see p. 123).

● You know basic anatomy and the difference in blood flow from a vein and an artery. You can perform CPR and other first aid.

●● You can comfortably treat minor traumas and illnesses and narrow down a diagnosis. You may be a nurse or EMT.

●●● Your training allows you to perform major operations and treat serious injuries. You may be an internist, pediatrician, or general practitioner.

●●●● You can diagnose and treat all but the rarest of illnesses. You may be a surgeon or specialist.

●●●●● You are a noted medical expert, sought out for your knowledge and insight.

Specialties: First Aid, Hematology, Pathology, Pharmacy, Phlebotomy, Surgery, Trauma Care, Veterinary

OCCULT

Even though Hunters are themselves invested in the dealing-with of creatures of supernatural origin, that doesn't convey any inherent understanding of the fine details of such to them. Even to the most vigilant cell, the World of Darkness remains a strange place, to say nothing of the liminal spaces of the world that don't conform to the human paradigm.

Occult represents knowledge of the mystical world, from the rites and practices of various cultural notions of magic through any amount of esoteric knowledge. You can recognize occult sigils and folk-magic practices, effective or not.

● You know a handful of the world's secrets at a rudimentary level.

●● You can sift the truth from pop occult nonsense.

●●● You have firsthand experience of something inexplicable, even by Hunter standards.

●●●● You could make a physical model of the metaphysical cosmology with some degree of cultural accuracy.

●●●●● Ghosts and sorcerers consult with you on obscure lore.

Specializations: Alchemy, Blood Magic, Faeries, Ghosts, Goetia, Grimoires, Magi, Metaphysics, Necromancy, Parapsychology, Vampires

POLITICS

Politics covers diplomacy, both human and otherwise, as well as the bureaucracy of worldly institutions. You can work with, and possibly put pressure on, city government and perhaps higher levels. Among the Reckoning subculture, you know the inside scoop on which cells claim which territories, which org is nursing a grudge with whom, and where more than a few bodies are buried, literally.

●	You follow mortal political affairs in your region, and you know "the lay of the land" as regards local Hunter politics.
●●	You can apply influence at a local level, or you know who can.
●●●	You could run political campaigns or political machines, or make waves among werewolves as an up-and-comer.
●●●●	You know the true personalities of the real movers and shakers, human and perhaps even supernatural, in your area.
●●●●●	You're either acknowledged as an elder statesman or shall someday be.

Specialties: City Government, Diplomacy, Media, National Politics, State/Provincial Politics, Org (specific)

SCIENCE

Science is a broad remit, covering everything from basic principles of life to the understanding of universal entropy. The laws of science govern the physical world — mostly — and individuals who are a part of that world study them. Even creatures beyond the realm of "traditional" science may be well versed in the truths of the temporal world.

Levels of the Science Skill roughly match those in Academics, from "some college" to "world-famous scholar." Also like Academics, characters with a rating in Science get a free specialty.

●	You dabble in the sciences and understand the principles behind the building blocks of life.
●●	Your study goes deeper than the surface, explaining as much "why" as "what".
●●●	You make an excellent scientific manager; you can run a laboratory, interpret scientific findings, and come up to speed on scientific research in most fields. You can repair scientific equipment.
●●●●	You are an expert in your field and in those allied to it.
●●●●●	Few peers match your understanding, and others come to you for guidance.

Specialties: Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Demolitions, Engineering, Genetics, Geology, Mathematics, Physics

TECHNOLOGY

As a Skill, Technology acts as something of a moving target; it governs the operation and understanding of "modern" technological developments, with a very impressionistic definition for "modern." A hundred years ago, Technology might have most often concerned itself with steam engines and electricity. Now, it governs computers and computer systems. Of course, now computers govern almost everything, including steam turbines in power plants and electrical systems in office buildings.

●	You know how to upgrade a home PC and keep it protected from viruses.
●●	You can conceal your IP, operate drones, and fake a digital photograph.
●●●	You can create and unleash your own viruses without fear of detection.
●●●●	You could personally manage cybersecurity for a business or region.
●●●●●	On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog — or that you're there at all.

Specialties: Artillery, Coding, Computer Building, Data Mining, Energy Systems, Hacking, Networks, Phones, Surveillance Systems

Advantages

In addition to unique Attributes and human skills, Hunter characters have many possible Advantages when they start play, from a knack with languages to a squad of sympathetic bat-swinging hooligans available on demand. Like everything else, we demarcate Advantages with dots, usually ranging from one to five. There is no penalty for having zero dots in an Advantage – that's just normal. Few rolls directly involve Advantages, although the Storyteller might call for Intelligence + Linguistics to decipher a suspected vampire's personal journals written on vellum, or Subterfuge + Contacts to plant a rumor about that suspected vampire among the downtown demimonde.

Advantages are divided into Merits and Backgrounds. The flip side of Advantages, Flaws cause ongoing problems for the character.

Merits

Merits describe knacks, gifts, and just plain good fortune inherent to the character: Physical, Mental, and Social. Although something could happen in the course of play to change them – especially once weird inexplicable magic gets unleashed — characters' Merits remain fairly constant over the course of the story.

Linguistics

Every character has perfect fluency in their birth language and (unless the player and Storyteller have a reason to declare otherwise) in the dominant language of the chronicle setting. For example, a Lebanese vampire in a Mexico City-set chronicle can speak and read Arabic and Spanish. Storytellers may opt to allow Hunters whose birth tongue matches that of the setting to take a second language anyway.

Each dot in Linguistics allows the character to fluently speak, write, and read one additional language besides those two default languages.

Note that reading centuries-old documents or chanting in a strange dialect may impose additional Difficulty to Academics or Occult tests.

Flaw: (••) Illiterate. You cannot read or write. Your Academics and Science Skills are capped at 1, and you can have no specialty in them incorporating modern knowledge.

Looks

Not all Hunters have the glamour of a cover model or iconic actor. Some of them look even better. And some, of course, look far worse.

Looks modifiers apply only when you can be seen. The Storyteller rules whether these modifiers apply during Social conflicts on a conflict-by-conflict (or even pool-by-pool) basis.

●● **Beautiful:** You add one extra die to all appropriate Social dice pools.

●●●● **Stunning:** You add two extra dice to all appropriate Social dice pools, as above.

Flaw: (●●) Repulsive: You lose two dice from all relevant Social dice pools.
Flaw: (●) Ugly: You lose one die from all relevant Social dice pools.

Nutritionist

You have a knack for making hearty, healthy meals that satisfy as well as being the stuff a body needs. Much as in a fire station, a good cook earns the appreciation of their fellow Hunters, and "family time" around the table helps keep many cells from becoming dysfunctional, especially against the odds they face each night.

● **Solo Cooking:** You personally recover one extra Superficial Health level at the beginning of a session that begins with you having had the opportunity to prepare a meal before the session begins.

●● **Cell Chef:** Your whole cell recovers one extra Superficial Health level at the beginning of a session that begins with you having had the opportunity to prepare a meal for them before the session begins. (Anyone who would have been apart from the cell at mealtime, such as in a vampire's captivity while the rest of the cell is at the safe house, does not gain this benefit.)

Psychological Traits

The Reckoning is a stressful event and the Hunt is a particularly demanding way to lead one's life. Its risks take their toll on a Hunter's mind or personality, to say nothing of those individuals whose personalities place them in jeopardy even before they discover their purpose and Drive.
Flaw: (●●): Living on the Edge: You're one of those people who feel compelled to take every chance to experience life at its fullest. When you are confronted with a chance to indulge a risky temptation you haven't done before (such as snorting a new drug, imbibing vampire blood, or taking a changeling lover), you suffer a two-dice penalty to all actions until you either partake of the new experience or the scene ends. This Flaw won't compel you to undertake suicidal actions… but you may not always be able to accurately predict the consequences of your actions.
Flaw: (●●): Weak-Willed: You struggle to assert your own personality when confronted with the will of another. You may not necessarily be submissive; perhaps you feel more confident when following another person's lead. Even when you're aware of supernatural attempts to sway you mentally or emotionally (such as with Charm, Command, or Terrify effects — see p. 167–168), you may not use the active resistance systems to avoid those effects.

Substance Abuse

Unfortunately, many Hunters find themselves taking comfort in substances in order to cope with the grim reality of their world. With one of these Flaws, you have an addiction to a substance, perhaps even a supernatural one. Remember to specify the substance you use.

Note that Substance Abuse is a genuine health issue, and is included here to represent the systemic and narrative drawbacks of how it affects the Hunter. Labeling it as a Flaw here isn't a value judgment. See the Appendix on p. 274 for more information on calibration and safety techniques for dealing with such issues at the game table.

Flaw: (●●) Severe Addiction: Lose two dice from all pools when you did not indulge in your substance of choice during the last scene, except pools for actions that will immediately obtain your drug.

Flaw: (●) Addiction: Lose one dice from all pools when you did not indulge in your substance of choice during the last scene, except pools for actions that will immediately obtain your drug.

Supernatural Situations

Hunters are occasionally touched by the supernatural themselves. These Merits and Flaws don't make the Hunter anything other than human, though they hint at a world in which lines of distinction between mortal and monster aren't so absolute.

Hunters occasionally react to other Hunters who "bear the taint of the supernatural" with a variety of responses. Some Hunters don't care, or feel sympathy. Others see such traits as evidence of collusion or sympathy with the night and react with hostility, or even violence. Hunters are weird, man.

Hunters who have either Merits or Flaws of this category don't count as monstrous or "Unnatural" for the purposes of Endowment Edges, however (see p. 97).

●● **Unseemly Aura:** Something's different about the way certain supernatural creatures perceive you. Monsters occasionally believe you to be one of their own, or a supernatural creature of an entirely different (and possibly hostile) type. While it may lead the quarry to overestimate you, it could also lead to some awkward situations later down the line.

Flaw: (●) Stigmata: You bleed from open wounds on your hands, feet, and forehead when you suffer physical injury or Willpower damage (but not from spending Willpower). This attracts attention, leaves traces, and may penalize some dice pools at the Storyteller's discretion. Choose either Health or Willpower damage at character creation; this Flaw may be taken a second time for the other damage type, but, oh boy, are you asking for attention.

Flaw: (●●) Crone's Curse: Some supernatural affliction has affected you and aged you rapidly, such as a sorcerer's "evil eye" or having imbibed aberrant vampire blood. You appear at least a decade older than you are. In addition, your health has suffered, and you have one fewer box on your health tracker than you otherwise would.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds describe advantages of relationship, circumstance, and opportunity: material possessions, social networks, and the like. Backgrounds are external Traits, not internal, and the player should always rationalize how the character came to possess them, as well as what they represent. Who are your Contacts? Why do your Allies support you? Where did you meet your Retainers? What investments do you possess that yield your four dots in Resources? You don't have to do all of that at first – but be ready with an answer when the Storyteller asks during play, or be ready to suggest an answer that ties into the ongoing storyline.

The implication here is that no small amount of a Hunter's Background may be connected to a time when they had worked for an org. Certainly, a Hunter's story doesn't have to include a connection to orgs -- it's perfectly possible to have Allies of one's own -- but no few Hunters originally began in service to orgs and eventually grew disillusioned with them, leaving to go their own way and leave the orgs' mechanisms of social control behind.

Backgrounds are discrete, not progressive, Traits. The same Background can be acquired multiple times.

EXAMPLE:

Martin purchases the Allies Background twice, once at one dot (his neighbor lookout) and once at three dots (his trusted star lawyer), representing two different Allies.

Allies

Allies are other people who support and help you: family, friends, or even a mortal organization that owes you some loyalty. Although Allies usually aid you willingly, without coaxing or coercion, they are not always available to offer assistance; they have their own concerns and can do only so much for the sake of your relationship. Usually, Allies appear about once per story. They're not part of the cell and they're not Hunters.

Allies can be almost anyone with some reasonable connection to you, depending on what your Storyteller will allow. You may have friends in the precinct morgue, at a tabloid newspaper or gossip blog, among high society, or at the railroad yard. Allies are generally trustworthy (though they probably don't know the extent of your Hunter perspective, or even that the supernatural exists). However, nothing comes for free. If you wind up drawing favors from your friend in the Russian Mafia, he'll probably ask you to do him a favor in kind in the future.

Enemies are the opposite of Allies and are taken as Flaws.

You can use the Supporting Character Template rules to create Allies or Enemies when you buy them or first call on them, and you can write them down on the Relationship Map (see p. 84), though many groups leave this process up to the Storyteller.

Build Allies or Enemies from a budget of points based on their Effectiveness and on their Reliability. The maximum points in one Ally is six. Ally or Enemy groups appear in numbers equal to the number of players' characters.

All Enemies are rated two fewer dots than their Effectiveness; a Gifted Ally costs three dots as an Ally, but only provides one dot as a Flaw. Enemies all have the same Reliability: whenever the Storyteller thinks they should show up, but probably at least once per story (even if indirectly).

EFFECTIVENESS

●	Weak individual, likely useless in a violent or potentially violent situation.
●●	Average individual or a tight-knit group of Weak individuals (neighborhood kids who solve mysteries, church group, NGO chapter)
●●●	Gifted individual or a dangerous group of Average individuals (a street gang, a celebrity entourage, a blue-collar union local)
●●●●	Superlative individual, a Gifted individual with magic or other supernatural powers, or a well-armed group of Gifted individuals (a private security squad, a lawyer contingent, an org strike team)

RELIABILITY

●	When you call on them, they appear half the time.
●●	When you call on them, they appear within 1-10 hours (roll a die).
●●●	When you call on them, they appear as soon as possible.

SUPPORTING CHARACTER TEMPLATES

Use these templates to build Storyteller characters when full character details are unnecessary. Supporting characters are known more for what they can effect, rather than distinct Traits like players' characters. Advantages might be unnecessary based on the supporting character's concept (as they might be better reflected by an action pool) — come to an agreement with the Storyteller for what the supporting character should be able to accomplish, and how. For more information on General Difficulties and pools, see "Antagonist Formats" on p. 166.

WEAK INDIVIDUAL (2/1)

Pools: Two key action pools at 2, three at 1
Advantages: None

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL (3/2)

Pools: Two key action pools at 3, three at 2, four at 1
Advantages: up to 3 points (2 points maximum Flaws)

GIFTED INDIVIDUAL (4/2)

Pools: One key action pool at 4, two at 3, two at 2, two at 1
Advantages: up to 10 points (4 points maximum Flaws)

SUPERLATIVE INDIVIDUAL (5/3)

Pools: Two key action pools at 5, two at 4, two at 3, two at 2
Advantages: up to 15 points (no Flaws)

Contacts

You know people – helpful people – from many different walks of life. Contacts primarily provide you with information in their areas of expertise, and they may want to exchange favors of various kinds. For different kinds of help, use your Influence (p. 75) in the mortal world, or call on your Allies (p. 73) or Mentor (p. 76).

A Contact is someone in an excellent position to get information. They might be a police dispatcher, rather than a homicide lieutenant, or a congressional staffer, rather than a senator. Information brokers, gossip columnists, underworld fixers, and reporters make excellent Contacts. Org operatives, from information security specialists to field agents, naturally make extremely valuable Contacts in a Hunter's line of work. You can define your Contacts when you buy this Background or as you need to introduce them in play. Whenever you create them, make sure to add them to the Relationship Map (see p. 84).

●	One Contact who can do or get something cheap or common for you (Resources 1). Examples: a weed dealer, a car salesman.
●●	One Contact who can do or get something useful for you (Resources 2). Examples: small-time gun dealer, veterinarian.
●●●	One Contact who can do or get something expensive or hard for you (Resources 4). Examples: security systems expert; org strike team marksman, narcotics agent, or other useful field.

Fame

People know your name and eagerly seek out news of your activities. You might be a movie star, rock star, or other celebrity. Fame grants pull in mass and social media; you have more ways than most to manipulate the thoughts of the populace. You likely have ways to mask the fact that you're involved in things that you prefer to keep secret, such as a body double.

In some circumstances, the Storyteller may allow you to use Fame in a Social test dice pool instead of another Trait, especially to get into an otherwise exclusive venue or event. "Do you know who I am?" doesn't work everywhere, but it does work. Each level of Fame subtracts one from the Difficulty of Social tests involving your fans, so long as the test doesn't involve anything too outlandish. (Or if it does, consequences surely will follow.)

Fame has its downside, of course – it's harder for you to tail someone unobtrusively, for example, and who wants groupies hanging around the door to the cell safe house all day tagging its location on Instagram? You should look into taking Disguise as a Skill specialty.

By default, Fame applies among humans, but some supernatural creatures are especially aware of mortal news and trends. The Storyteller will determine whether Fame benefits apply to any given supernatural individual. (And some supernatural personalities might well be famous themselves....)

● A select subculture knows who you are and admires you.

●● You are a local celebrity, recognized by a plurality of the city.

●●● Most people in the country know your name, at least.

●●●● Everybody who even vaguely cares about social trends or your field knows something about you.

●●●●● Your Fame reaches mass national or even global audiences. You are a major movie star, stadium-filling rock act, or former president.

Infamy (●● Flaw): You are famous for something horrible. At the very least, the Difficulty of most reaction tests increases by the amount of the Flaw; at worst, the authorities attempt to kill or capture you whenever you appear. You may be on an org's Most Wanted list, or a rival to the sorcerer you brought to justice may have shared your description with others of her cabal.

Dark Secret (● Flaw): The Dark Secret Flaw provides one fewer point than the equivalent Infamy, as your black deeds remain unknown to all but you and perhaps one or two very motivated enemies. It's also easier to uncover than a truly life-threatening secret, such as a significant debt to a criminal or org member.

Infamous Partner (● Flaw): Your spouse, lover, or some other significant individual to you has Infamy (as above) that occasionally tarnishes you by association.

Influence

You have pull in your community, whether through wealth, prestige, political office, blackmail, or unseen supernatural manipulation somehow in your favor. Hunters with high Influence can sway, and in rare cases even control, the politics and society of their community, occasionally even among the police and city bureaucracy… and even the orgs.

By default, Influence applies most within one group or region of your city. Groups can be large, even diffuse: organized crime, media, religion, the police, city government, etc. Regions should be larger than neighborhoods or all but the largest individual domains: Brooklyn, the Rive Gauche, the South Side, the Ginza, etc. Your Influence applies to the city as a whole at one dot less than it does within your group or region. Using local Influence in another city in the same area, state, or province might be possible at an additional one-dot penalty, and so on. So, a Hunter might be Powerful (••••) in Hollywood, Entrenched (•••) everywhere in Los Angeles, merely Influential (••) in San Diego or San Francisco, and just Well-Connected (•) in Chicago or New York.

The Storyteller may require you to use Influence in place of a Trait in some dice pools, particularly Social tests attempting to sway minor bureaucrats or the equivalent in your group. This Background helps you have an "abandoned" building demolished (or preserved), not start global wars.

Note that, for Hunter, Influence is a fraught Advantage. The more they use Influence, the more it attracts attention, and even if supernatural foes may need to keep to the shadows, resentful orgs may well turn their attention to this upjumped. Thematically, Hunters should remain Underdogs, after all (see p. 152), even if they have some flex among their communities. History is rife with individuals who overstepped their Influence, or who relied on it too often and were undone in a single desperate moment.

● **Well-connected:** You're guaranteed a respectful hearing.

●● **Influential:** People want to do you favors.

●●● **Entrenched:** Mortal power-brokers and factions hesitate to oppose you.

●●●● **Powerful:** Without a good reason to do otherwise, functionaries and foot soldiers obey.

●●●●● **Dominant:** Lesser figures try to figure out what you want and do it first.

Flaw: (●●) Despised: One group or region of the city lives only to thwart you and your cell. Subtract two dice from dice pools attempting to convince a neutral actor to support you politically or do you a favor. The Storyteller should take any opportunity to involve your haters in the story.

Flaw: (●) Disliked: Subtract one die from Social test dice pools involving any group in the city except your Contacts and Allies or other explicitly loyal supporters.

Mask

As individuals who must sometimes work in secrecy or with a degree of plausible deniability, Hunters find great value in being able to protect themselves with false identities.

By default (at no dots) a Hunter either has no need of a Mask, such as those who haven't yet run afoul of the law or rival orgs to such a degree that risky records of them exist, or has a viable fake ID that can stand up to a traffic stop or similar surface scrutiny. A zero-dot Mask does not pass a background check, much less a proper investigation by the authorities.

● You have a good fake identity, including a credit card, bank account, credit history, birth certificate, etc., all in your Mask's name. You can pass a state or provincial-level background check.

●● Your Mask can pass a background check with the national police: FBI, Scotland Yard, or the equivalent. If you had a military or intelligence record, it has been classified.

If you have a two-dot Mask, you can also buy the following Advantages for one dot each:

● Zeroed: Someone in high places has purged your real records. You officially don't exist.

● Cobbler: You can make or source Masks. Making a Mask takes three days per dot and possibly exposes you online; sourcing Masks takes one day per dot, but costs something in return. How much depends on your leverage, margin on the Social test, or whatever else the Storyteller decides.

Flaw: (●●) Person of Interest: Your biometrics, name, history, known associates, and aliases appear in several intelligence agency databases, flagged as a potential terrorist. Any org operator (or comparable analyst) can probably put two and two together to realize what you've been up to.

Flaw: (●) Serial Error: Somewhere, someone made a mistake to your detriment. As a result, anyone who does a background check on you will learn that you died recently or are on a dangerous watchlist or are otherwise (unjustly) worthy of detention or a call to the police. (Of course, you may well be worthy of detention, just not for this particular reason.) This Flaw also applies to any database lookups on your identity.

Mentor

This Trait represents one or a group of Hunters who look out for you, offering guidance, information, or aid once in a while. Such a role may fall to an individual who helped initiate you into the ways of the Hunt (if you were fortunate enough to have such) or may be someone of the same creed or similar Drive. Or they might be of an entirely different perspective; you might not even know you have a Mentor, if they're the type to intervene on your behalf from some level of remove and obscurity.

The relationship might even be contentious or purely pragmatic. Your Mentor might trade information to mutual benefit, or even come to your aid if you have respected the relationship. A Mentor may be powerful, but their power need not be direct. Depending on the number of dots in this Background, your Mentor might be no more than a wild-eyed crank with a remarkable information network, or they might be a veteran of a dozen Hunts with tremendous influence and reputation among those seeking the Reckoning. They may offer advice, negotiate with a powerful org on your behalf, steer law enforcement clear of you, and will almost certainly give warning when you're walking into supernatural situations you don't understand. Your Mentor may well expect reciprocity, or some kind of return on their personal investment in you.

A Mentor rating could even represent a Hunter cell, such as the werewolf skinners of Appalachia or a group of ex-BOPE deserters. As a general rule, a Mentor group costs one dot more than a single Mentor of that level: A cell of three experienced vampire-slayers might be a four-dot Mentor group, for example.

Whoever they are, write them on your Relationship Map when you buy them (see p. 84).

As a general rule, Mentors provide a helpful word and occasional political pushes or cover, but they don't fight your battles or call in valuable favors. If they must do so for their own sake to aid you, you probably lose a dot or more of this Background, after arousing their ire.

- ● Rookie Hunter Mentor (one successful Hunt)
- ●● Journeyman Hunter Mentor (perhaps three successful Hunts)
- ●●● Experienced Hunter Mentor (five or so successful Hunts)
- ●●●● Veteran Hunter Mentor (holy smokes, nine or more successful Hunts)
- ●●●●● Van Helsing (how has this Hunter not yet met their demise?)

ADVERSARY

A rival Hunter who generally wishes you (or your cell, or perhaps even your Mentor) ill, an Adversary is the reverse Flaw of the Mentor Background. Adversaries range from one-dot elders to three-dot veterans or strike teams. The Storyteller uses either the Adversary's Status or some specific other Trait when building dice pools with which to oppose the player characters, not the dots in Adversary.

Resources

This Background describes your Resources. These benefits are not necessarily financial in nature and are rarely completely liquid, but you can often sell them to gain money. It could take weeks or even months to do so, depending on how much needs to be sold. Especially as the state of modern banking becomes almost entirely digital, well connected rivals and supernatural nemeses can freeze or deplete bank accounts, Hunters increasingly return to holding their Resources in cash – or in gold, art, materiel, and even contraband.

Note too that the Hunter lifestyle is rarely one that coincides with steady employment or even business hours. Dots of Resources provide an income for you to maintain your standard of living, but you must detail the source of your income and the form this Background takes. After all, it might dry up, get stolen, or otherwise vanish during the chronicle.

- ● **Portfolio Proletariat:** You live paycheck to paycheck: apartment, car, camping equipment.
- ●● **Middle Class:** Nice apartment or small house, a car or two, high-end equipment
- ●●● **Rich:** Great condo or nice house, luxury items and cars, high-end equipment for several people
- ●●●● **Wealthy:** Mansion, helicopter or private jet, very specialized high-end equipment
- ●●●●● **Ultra Rich:** Many mansions, "anything money can buy"

Flaw: (●) Destitute: You have no money and no home.

Retainers

You have one or more loyal and steadfast servants or assistants. Retainers may be paid employees, longtime stewards of yourself or your family, or even victims of some kind of unsavory scheme that keeps them indentured to you. (Although this last certainly calls your morality into question.)

You always control retainers in some fashion: a salary, some sort of legal leverage, or even supernatural mesmerism. Although typically loyal, retainers may betray you if the reward outweighs the risk or if you have treated them badly. The Storyteller can always call for a scene between you and a retainer.

Retainers should act as people with their own goals and desires, not puppets. Indeed, some of what they may want is a return to their own autonomy, or just a fat bonus at the end of the year. Storytellers can use Retainers to add flavor to the chronicle; don't let them or their misuse damage the story. They won't suicidally leap into certain doom, and they're not mindless homunculi to be placed in lackwit danger.

- ● Underwhelming retainer: A child, criminal lowlife, or horror nerd follows you around and "helps out" as you direct them. Build them as a Weak mortal.
- ●● A valet, a family servant, a lover, or a "sidekick" who may help you out of a desire to

oppose the supernatural: give them a backstory. Build them as an Average mortal.

●●● A retainer competent enough to act independently and make lesser problems go away. They are at the very least a Gifted mortal, and may even have abilities unbeknownst to you.

Flaw: (●) Stalkers: You have a tendency to attract people who become a tad too smitten with you for your own good. A former retainer retains their memory of you and a desire to reconnect. They may be hungry, love-maddened, desperate, opportunistic, or any combination or variation. Should you get rid of them, another soon appears.

Safe House

Safe House represents a degree of security or distinction for one's domicile above and beyond a place to sleep and prepare meals. A Hunter's home is their castle, to an extent.

A Hunter with no dots in Safe House has a room in an abandoned motel, a rented office, an apartment with windows in various states of disrepair, or a van parked behind a disused machine shop. They can still remain safe and "at home" in this relatively small and insecure safe house by default. The Storyteller may allow a player character to default to a somewhat better safe house from another Background such as Resources, Status, or Influence. Of course, if those Backgrounds go away, so does the character's nice safe house.

A character with none of those other Backgrounds, however, can still have a perfectly reasonable safe house as long as they have this Background. For instance, a character might not have enough money to afford a 20-room Victorian mansion in today's economy, but if their great-grandmother left them one that had been fully paid for, there's no reason they can't remain in a residence as it slowly becomes more dilapidated. Aside from "Your house looks like a vampire's lair!" of course. Base ratings in Safe House abstract the domicile's size, security, and privacy. All of those factors affect the chance of spotting, penetrating, and surveilling the Hunter's home. Add +1 to the Difficulty of, or one die to dice pools resisting, such efforts for each dot of base Safe House rating.

Hunters know their sanctums intimately. For each dot of base Safe House rating, add one per dot to dice pools to notice danger while in the domicile.

BASE SAFE HOUSE

● Small safe house, but more secure and private than the default. Examples: basement apartment, record shop backroom, locked storeroom in a warehouse.

●● Good size, security, or privacy. Examples: a single-family home or townhome, converted downtown storefront, secure sewer tunnel.

●●● Very large, secure, or private. Examples: a compound outside town, a bank building, a decommissioned subway station.

Flaw: (●) No Safe House: You're not necessarily homeless, but you have no expectation of security while "at home. Examples include a squat with high traffic, a flat in a distressed part of town, or a malfunctioning "mobile" home.

SAFE HOUSE MERITS AND FLAWS

You can add Merits and Flaws to your Safe House if you wish. They stack with the base Safe House rating to produce the total dots in this Background for projects and other uses.

Note that you can make Safe House a shared Background among your cell – easily the best way to afford a Safe House with lots of features.

● **Hidden Armory:** Each dot in this Merit adds a stand of basic, mundane arms to your safe house's supply: one pistol and one long firearm, with ammunition. They are as secure from discovery as your resting place. These aren't as noteworthy as those provided by the Arsenal Edge (see p. 90), nor do they automatically replenish if misplaced.

● **Panic Room:** Your safe house has a dedicated, locked place to house two individuals with a base Difficulty to breach of 5. It can also be used to keep captives (in which case the breach difficulty becomes an escape Difficulty). Each extra dot either allows you to house twice as many individuals (up to a maximum of 32, only in very large safe houses) or adds +1 to the breach or escape Difficulty. This Merit is not available in small safe houses.

● **Watchmen:** Whether it's private security or criminal toughs, someone's guarding your safe house. Each dot of this Merit supplies four Average guards and one Gifted boss (see Supporting Character Templates, p. 74). If guards would be conspicuous here, buy this Merit cautiously. Note, too, that the guards aren't themselves Hunters, and are in fact probably entirely unfamiliar with the supernatural.

● **Laboratory:** Your safe house has an equipped laboratory with a dedicated industrial sink, gas jet, reinforced floor, etc. Each dot of this Merit adds one to the dice pool for rolls related to one Science or Technology specialty. This Merit is not available in small safe houses.

● **Luxury:** High-definition flat screens, designer furniture, memorable decor, or other distinctive details give you a two-dice bonus to Social tests dealing with guests in your safe house. If you don't have at least three dots of Resources (•••), your décor was gained illegally.

● **Postern:** Your safe house has a rear exit, secret tunnel, grating in the cellar leading into the sewers, or other unobtrusive way out. For each dot of this Merit, add one die to your dice pools to evade or escape surveillance near your safe house.

● **Security System:** Your safe house has a better-than-average security system. For each dot of this Merit, add one die to your dice pool to resist (or alert you to) unauthorized entry into your safe house.

● **Surgery:** Your safe house has one room equipped as a field surgery or better. Add two dice to relevant dice pools, generally Medicine, for tests performed in your safe house. This Merit is not available in small safe houses.

Flaw: (●●) Compromised: Your safe house has been raided once before, perhaps even before it was yours. It probably appears on someone's watchlist. Invaders or spies can add two dice to their pool to penetrate or surveil your safe house.

Flaw: (●) Creepy: Your safe house looks like the lair of the sorts of supernatural horrors you ostensibly hunt, and you may have even "moved in" after dealing with one of them. Unknowing neighbors might phone in a tip to the cops or just talk about the creepy place they saw. Your dice pools on Social tests to seduce or otherwise put human guests at ease while in your safe house are at a two-dice penalty.

Flaw: (●) Haunted: Your safe house has a supernatural manifestation in it that you don't control or really even understand. It might have a ghost, but a Haunted safe house could hold a dimensional portal, a cursed meteorite, or anything else you can't get rid of. The risk is that someone who does understand the manifestation could use it to breach your safe house's security. The Storyteller defines any other effect of the haunting, imposing at least a relevant one-die penalty or bonus to affected pools used in the safe house per dot of Haunted taken as a Flaw.

Status

You have something of a reputation and standing (earned or not) within a specified local community of Hunters, usually among your creed, but possibly as a remnant of time you may have served in an org. Status among Hunters derives as often from your perceived competency as much as it does from actual personal achievement. It may equate to rank, leadership, or the ability to rally a group of Martial Hunters to arms on short notice. It might even be virtual, such as esteem on a Dark Web information-trading site where Hunters share makeshift dossiers with each other.

Status among one faction of hunters does not transfer to the other. By and large, Status enjoyed among the Faithful is very different from Status in the Orpheus Group.

Status is very much a per-chronicle factor: One chronicle might feature a character who's the capo di tutti capi of Underground Hunters, while another chronicle depicts the local Underground Hunters as having no formal structure that could be led as such. Work with the Storyteller to explain your character's Status and what you expect to call upon it to effect.

In some chronicles, Storytellers may disallow Status, such as when the players' Hunters are the only Hunters present, and there's no immediate social structure

with which the cell would even be able to have a Status. Alternatively, a Status cap may exist in the chronicle, implying some structure but not an extensive one. Status is especially useful in chronicles that feature a strong societal interplay among Hunters, such as when a rising group of Hunters finds itself at odds with a well-funded but unpopular org, or when a chronicle intends to emphasize a "clash of creeds" or the like.

As well, in the largely decentralized society of Hunters, Status is valuable only so far as other Hunters acknowledge it. If you're the Witchfinder General of Vienna, that might mean jack shit to an active cell in Krakow, and even less in Addis Ababa.

Status affects only relationships between factions of Hunters. Whatever weird social constructs supernatural creatures have, those are beyond the bounds of Status (and they're not likely to recognize any esteem you have with Hunter groups, for their own part).

The Storyteller may occasionally require you to add your Status to a dice pool along with a Social Trait, especially for first meetings and faction-based happenings. In other cases, the Storyteller may allow you to substitute your Status for a Social Trait – but other Hunters may notice that you're skating by on Status, instead of properly using the Leadership Skill, for example. (The ol' appeal to one's own authority...)

● **Known:** An acknowledged Hunter, welcomed and seen as an up-and-comer.

●● **Respected:** You have responsibilities now, and rookies look up to you.

●●● **Influential:** You hold authority over part of your specified faction.

●●●● **Powerful:** You have an estimable title in your specified faction.

●●●●● **Luminary:** You sit at the table of power in the group, a paragon of your creed or faction

Flaw: (●●) Shunned: For some reason, you're completely loathed by one particular faction. You betrayed them, crossed a local leader, or even traded gunshots with them in the past. Members of this group will actively work against you if they can.

Flaw: (●●) Suspect: You're not good with this faction at all. You weaseled out of an agreement, crossed a line, or did something similar. You can try to stay out of sight and out of mind, but unless you somehow make amends, you suffer a two-dice penalty to all Social tests involving the offended faction.

WHERE ARE THE LORESHEETS?

Experienced World of Darkness players will be familiar with an additional type of Advantage, known as Loresheets. These generally represent knowledge about a specific event or individual in the World of Darkness and the systemic benefits of having that knowledge.

Hunter assumes that its limited and very human protagonists don't begin the game with specific knowledge of the supernatural, especially to the extent that it would grant them a systemic benefit. The role of Hunters is to find stuff out, not begin with a back catalog of supernatural secrets they already possess.

Storytellers who wish to adapt the function of Loresheets are encouraged to do so, especially if it's appropriate to a Hunter cell with specific, recurring antagonists across the span of an extended chronicle. But given that one of the most important aspects of Hunter is investigation and preparation, and the inherent unknowability of the occult (it's what the word means!), Loresheets aren't available to Hunters as a standard option for characters or chronicles.

Finishing Touches

Bear in mind that your character is more than a collection of Traits on a character sheet, they're a unique individual. How do they look? What do they like to do when not on the Hunt? Where do they live? Consider the following individual character elements, or adapt your own.

1. Who are your heroes or inspirational figures?
2. You have one significant personal item that you just can't live without. What is it and why?
3. What are your character's religious beliefs?
4. Why were you discharged from the military?
5. Your character has been arrested. Why?
6. Who has your character crossed?
7. If your character died tomorrow, what would they be remembered for?
8. Name someone your character has wronged.
9. Name something your character wants to learn.
10. Why are you estranged from your family?
11. Why didn't you take that big opportunity?
12. What about your life makes you want to run away from it all?
13. What would you give for ultimate power?
14. Where did that scar come from?
15. What's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?
16. There's a rumor about you going around. What is it? Is it true?
17. Why did you get that tattoo? What is it?
18. Would you rather be trusted or respected?
19. Your godfather, a strange man who rarely visited, arrived unannounced one day and gave you a gift. You never saw him again after that day. What was it?
20. You used to love playing by the pond with your little wooden boats as a child — until one day. What happened that day?
21. You always wondered about the odd monument in town/on campus. Every time you passed it, you felt your hair stand on end. What strange attachment do you have to the monument?
22. Your relative has been in convalescence for some time. You visit regularly. On your last visit, they told you something strange. What is it?
23. You and some friends found an old tunnel. Only you made it back alive. What happened down there?
24. That advert kept appearing in the newspaper every week. It read like a question, and for some reason you knew the answer. What was the question and answer?
25. A priest approached you and said he knew your parents before "the accident" and gave you something. What was it? Was there even an accident?
26. The gym was on a dead end street, and was usually busy by this time of night. When you arrived, it was like everyone had just left: a dumbbell rolling across the floor, a punch-bag still swinging. What was written on the walls?
27. A man ran up to you in the street one night, panic written across his face. He whispered something in your ear before rushing away. What was it?
28. Something is wrong with your brother or sister's shadow. What is it?
29. Who did your character leave behind to become a Hunter?
30. Your character is being blackmailed. Why and by whom?
31. Your character has a major phobia. What is it?
32. Your character had a major surgery in their teens. Why?
33. What was the last dream or nightmare your character remembers?
34. What double standards does your character have?
35. You arrived an hour late to your friend's costume party, but their house seems to have been abandoned for years. You recognize the nearby cars of other people attending the party. Something is carved into the door. What did it say?
36. You've always felt a close affinity to a certain mythological creature. What is it?
37. There's a family member not in any of your family photos. Who is it? Do you remember them ever being in the photos?

38. Your grandmother always told you as a child an odd version of a classic fairytale. Which one? What was odd about her version?
39. Who would you die to protect or save?
40. What would motivate your character to kill someone?
41. What if you later learned that the person you killed hadn't done what you thought they did?

Experience Points

Hunters learn things over time as they're facing down the supernatural, or even in parallel to it. As their characters acquire experience points, players can spend those points on improving their characters' Traits.

The experience point cost of a dot varies depending on what type of dot it is and how many dots you already have in that Trait.

"New level" on the table below means the level of Trait you want to buy. For example, if you want to go from two dots of Composure (●●) to three dots of Composure (●●●), you need to pay 15 experience points, because Composure 3 x 5 = 15.

Trait	Experience Points
Increase Attribute	New level x 5
Increase Skill	New level x 3
Specialty	3
Edge	7
Perk	3
Advantage	3 per dot

You cannot skip ahead and buy four dots of Composure (●●●●) for 20 points if you currently only have two dots of Composure (●●). You need to first buy the third dot of Composure (●●●) for 15 experience points, then buy four dots of Composure (●●●●) for 20.

Awarding Experience Points

At the end of each session, the Storyteller should reward players with experience points to represent having learned something during that particular session. The exact amount can vary, but obviously, the faster the players gain these rewards, the faster their characters become more potent. A standard experience award is somewhere between two to four points per session, while a fast-paced journey into the supernatural might be represented by six to eight points per session. A chronicle with a slow-burn might yield just a point or two per session (but rewards might also come in other forms, like information or narrative progression). See p. 110 for more information on time increments and terms.

Storytellers, don't feel like you always have to award every category below; these are simply examples. Remember that two to four experience points per session is assumed as typical.

Note that, given a steady rate of Experience Point accumulation, Hunters will run out of progression options before other characters from other World of Darkness games do. Systemically, this reinforces the notion that most Hunters' careers won't be as long as, say, a vampire's potentially endless unlife or a werewolf's journey toward becoming their own legend. Hunters are fragile, and yet repeatedly place themselves in harm's way — such is the urgency of the Reckoning.

Situation	Experience Point Reward
Participation	1
Perform something remarkable during the session; the whole table's appreciation of the character doing or saying a certain thing	1
Use a Skill, Edge, or other Trait in a clever or critical way	1
"Tell me something important your character learned this session."	1
Conclude a story within the greater chronicle	2-3

Alternative Progression

At the Storyteller's discretion, experience and character progression need not follow the above model. Some Storytellers prefer to offer progressions at certain key points during a story or chronicle, while some Storytellers forego feature progressions altogether and focus on narrative progression only. The choice belongs to the troupe and should be discussed during chronicle planning, just to communicate expectations.

Some suggestions for alternative progression rewards include:

- Increase a Skill at the end of a given session, or an Attribute at the end of every second session
- Take a new Edge at the end of a given story, after dealing definitely (one hopes…) with a supernatural individual
- Take a new Perk at the end of a session in which the cell encounters a new supernatural threat or comes into conflict with a rival org

The Relationship Map

Hunter depicts dramatic action. Drama occurs between people, some of whom may be vampires. When two people interact, they create, reinforce, or change a relationship. By drawing a Relationship Map, you can bring drama visually to the forefront, keep track of supporting characters you've encountered, and provide both Storyteller and players with emotional substance for those interpersonal scenes.

You begin the game with your players' characters, each of whom has Touchstones. Then perhaps you add mentors; human siblings, lovers, and friends; or a shady journalist who always knows the latest supernatural rumors. You almost certainly add the ranking leader of a rival org (or perhaps a sympathetic insider). Even the overt antagonists -- scheming vampires, berserk werewolves, nefarious sorcerers, and tragic ghosts -- merit entry into the Relationship Map. You never know when you may encounter them again, perhaps with a compromise to be made.

> By drawing a Relationship Map, you can bring drama visually to the forefront, keep track of supporting characters you've encountered, and provide both Storyteller and players with emotional substance for those interpersonal scenes.

As you draw lines and describe connections between your characters and these new Storyteller characters, the Relationship Map of your chronicle takes shape, and your game takes on life and possibility.

As more supporting characters appear and as relationships change, you scribble in new names and cross out old truths. Make note of that isolated cabin or the really great potential safe house that the Inquisitive found. Update the map as allies become adversaries following a failed operation in Kolkata, or as an unknown vampire turns an understanding ex-husband into a bloodthirsty fiend. Soon enough, the map becomes a mess of scribbled notes about the characters, Post-its with pictures, memorable quotes, wine stains, and sketches.

Your Relationship Map becomes your mad conspiracy wall or your pictures-and-string investigation board straight out of The Wire. Use it not just to drive drama, but also to keep track of the tangled web of local supernatural activity. Keep it near the table where everyone can read it. Its form is up to you: a big sheet of butcher paper, a digital mind map, a presentation deck, a printout of the map of your city with overlapping monster territory boundaries drawn in.

You can use whatever colors you have in a drawer or on the computer, but the Relationship Map illustration in this chapter uses these:

- Black denotes player character names, locations, and notes.
- Red denotes fellow H/hunters and their strongholds and interests.
- Blue marks humans and their activities and bases.

Arrows and Descriptors

You can go as deep into the graphical woods as you care to. For example, every line between two characters can be an arrow, pointing from the dominant party to the weaker party. If the sides have actual equality, then the line has no arrow ends. Draw one in when you figure out who really called the shots all along.

The other thing a relationship line needs is a label: a description of what the relationship means. Relationships always go both ways and are very seldom equal or the same in both directions. Humans and supernatural creatures alike are masters of wearing masks and hiding their true feelings, so an attitude arrow in one direction can be "hate" and "love" in the other. Other possible descriptors include: "overprotective," " jealousy," "blood-thrall," or "MASTER OF?"

Write one party's descriptor of the relationship on one side to the arrow, close to their name. Write the second party's descriptor on the other side, close to their name. Relationships you set at the beginning of the game and between cell members might well be both true and mutual, but connections the players and Storyteller add as the chronicle progresses only show what the players believe in the moment. Update the chart as true motives emerge, or as passions change.

Starting the Map

During Session Zero, you begin the Relationship Map, possibly working in pencil at first. At this first core concept stage, draw in the player's characters, along with several relationships and supporting cast members.

Pete the Killer

Need to know more about him. Tony introduced him to Faroukh.

The Rat King

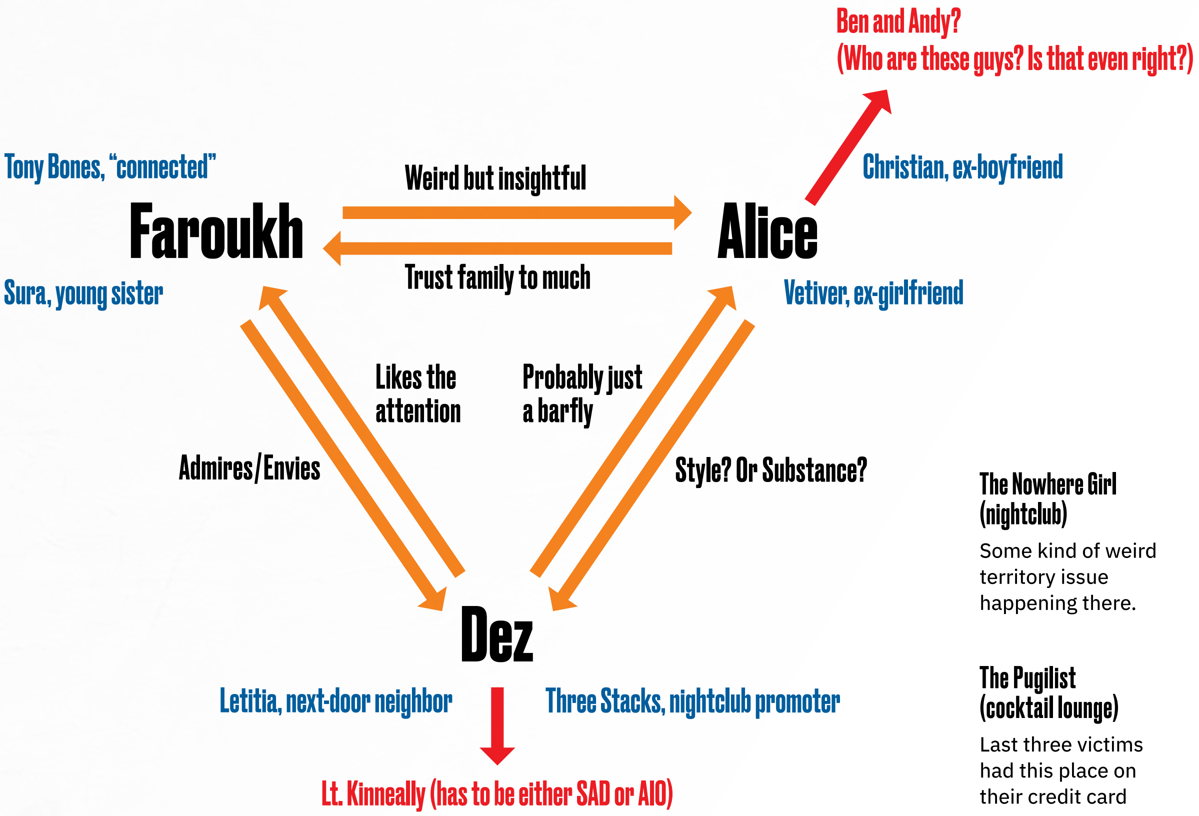
Obviously a vampire, but none of the victims have a connection to him. Using us? Not actually a vampire. Probably. This fucking guy.

~~Xiandria~~

Dealer at Nowhere Girl. RIP Xiandria.

Barbara Kinneally

Unhappily married to the Lieutenant, it seems.


Ben and Andy?
(Who are these guys? Is that even right?)
Tony Bones, "connected"
Weird but insightful
Christian, ex-boyfriend
Faroukh
Alice
Sura, young sister
Trust family to much
Vetiver, ex-girlfriend
Likes the attention
Probably just a barfly
Admires/Envies
Style? Or Substance?
Dez
Letitia, next-door neighbor
Three Stacks, nightclub promoter
Lt. Kinneally (has to be either SAD or AIO)

The Nowhere Girl (nightclub)

Some kind of weird territory issue happening there.

The Pugilist (cocktail lounge)

Last three victims had this place on their credit card statements.

McQueen (either a private yacht or the person the yacht is registered to)

DEAD RECKONING

Cell Relationships

Write down the names of the characters in big letters. Then draw lines (or arrows) between your character and two of the other characters in the cell. Write a positive relationship on one of the arrows and a negative one on the other. Positive cell relationships might include: “fascinated,” “old friend,” “confides in,” “owes big time,” and “fellow gun-lover.” Negative descriptors could read: “mistrust,” “competes over X’s affections,” “needs to upstage,” “slept with her girlfriend,” or “doesn’t respect me.”

Remember, you can change these relationships for the better or worse during character creation if you think of something better, something that fits into the characters’ story more elegantly, or in response to the events of the chronicle.

Turning Point

Write the name and details of your character’s pivotal moment with the supernatural that made them truly become a Hunter, awakening their Drive. Then draw an arrow pointing at your character and describing – initially – why they have taken up the Hunt. Descriptors might include “lost a loved one,” “relentlessly seeking justice,” “wants no one else to experience her victimization,” “is there more to werewolves than there seems to be?” and “hates.”

Factional Supporting Characters

In many chronicles, Hunters have connections to various factions and societies. Whether an inspiring member of the creed one looks up to or a particularly duplicitous rival in the branch office of one of the orgs, Hunters aren’t alone in the night. Ask the Storyteller for two local individuals attached to factions, or take a connection from another character’s entries or supporting cast. Write any newly named Storyteller characters in boxes. From your character box, now draw an arrow to or from each one and add descriptors. One relationship can be positive: “seeking mentorship,” “respects her candor,” “in awe of,” “bled together against the Old Fourth Ward Demon,” “fellow amateur astronomer,” or “weirdly attracted to.” The other is negative: “owes me money,” “backstabber,” “coward,” “blood junkie,” or “creepily into me.” None of these relationships (yet) equal full Advantages or Flaws, though you can always put dots into them later.

Note, too, that not all Hunter chronicles feature factions as prominently as others. Some chronicles have elaborate politics and large casts of those who would stalk supernatural quarry, as cell duty comes into conflict with org pride and different creeds try to demonstrate their efficacy against the unholy host. In other chronicles, it’s a small cell of Hunters all alone against the entirety of the night. A Relationship Map doesn’t have to be sprawling to depict a remarkable story. ■

HOLY
VOR GEBR
SPRENGKA
EINSETZ

Chapter Three:

EDGES AND EQUIPMENT

There is grim purpose in all I do; and I warn you that you do not thwart me. Take care, for the sake of others if not for your own.
— Abraham Van Helsing, from Bram Stoker's Dracula

Edges represent a wide variety of advantages that make a Hunter a cut above most people, at least in regard to hunting supernatural terrors. Edges do not themselves have a rating, but players instead purchase additional Perks. Each Perk enhances the Edge in some way, adding to or changing its effect. Most Perks can be acquired only once, but some (such as creature specializations) can be learned multiple times, and there's no limit to the amount of Perks a Hunter can possess in a given Edge.

Edges are divided into three categories: Assets, Aptitudes and Endowments. These have no intrinsic rules associated with them, but they help classify and categorize the various edges.

Concepts and Flexibility

The Edges as written leave a great deal of room for players to "skin" their Hunters and customize the approach a given Edge takes. This is intentional, as it allows for players to custom-tailor how their Hunters pursue the Reckoning while at the same time creating a consistent set of systems "under the hood" that they can trust for fairness. For example, a Hunter with the Arsenal Edge might be a practiced gunsmith, themselves manufacturing individual arms to wield against the quarry, or they might be a black-marketeer who always seems to be able to provide weaponry from a number of shadowy sources. Or even stranger circumstances: Perhaps the Hunter wakes on fateful days to a high-caliber revolver on their nightstand, left there by some unknown messenger. Whatever the details, the result is the same systemically, in that the Hunter has access to the weapons in question.

Players are heartily encouraged to detail their Edges as best fits the chronicle Tenets, their concepts, and their creeds.

Systems

Each Edge requires a specific dice pool to be used in tests, though the pool can vary depending on the narrative context of the individual Hunter's Edge. The pool composition (Attribute + Skill) is fixed upon gaining the Edge and cannot normally be changed after that.

Use of Perks do not require Desperation Dice (see p. 127) to be used, but the Difficulties involved often make it advisable, which is also part of what distinguishes Hunters from normal humans. When Perks derive benefits from the margin on tests, the successes must be divided between Perks in the case where more than one Perk applies.

EXAMPLE:

Amineh possesses the Arsenal Edge, together with Team Requisition and Special Features Perks. At the start of a scene she wants to provide as many large-caliber handguns as possible to her cell, together with concealed cases. The test is a win with a margin of three. One success in the margin is required for the case, and the remaining two provide two additional handguns, each with their own case.

During character creation, choose two Edges and one Perk or one Edge and two Perks.

Assets

Sometimes it's not what you know — it's what you own or who you know. Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between life and death, and most Hunter cells make sure to have a wide selection of resources at hand. Asset Edges represent access to tools and contacts above and beyond what can be bought or built by a private citizen. Whether a curated library of 16th-century Vatican records passed down through generations, or a team of retired Yugoslavian werewolf hunters, these assets can make all the difference between being a vampire's slayer and a vampire's next victim.

Arsenal

The Hunter has access to, or can jerryrig, a wide variety of weapons not usually available to the public. These include both firearms and melee weapons, but not bombs, mines, or other munitions. Whether borrowed from an old contact or slapped together in a garage, the weapons are otherwise mundane and only available for a limited time. After that the weapons either need to be returned to whomever provided them, require extensive maintenance, or simply break down on account of being jerry-rigged (whatever fits the situation for the scene).

Edge Pool: Hunters who keep and maintain their own arsenal test Intelligence + Craft. Those who rely on contacts test Manipulation + Streetwise instead.

System: On a winning test at Difficulty 4 the Hunter is able to provide a single personal firearm or melee weapon, such as a sniper rifle, handgun, or high-steel combat blade. The test is made at the start of a scene, and the Hunter must have reasonable access to their supply cache or contact. (No win, no matter how critical, is going to produce a weapon in the midst of the Sahara.) The test can be attempted only once for each scene, and the weapon can be used only for that scene. Subsequent tests in later scenes can provide the same or similar weapon, though.

Arsenal Perks

- **Team Requisition:** The Hunter is able to provide additional copies of the same weapon up to the margin of the win. The weapons provided all have the same perks (if any) and are subject to the same limited duration.
- **Special Features:** The weapon provided comes with a number of special features up to the margin of the win. Features can range from thermal sights to disguised cases, and the Storyteller is the final arbiter on what qualifies as a feature for these purposes. Special features can be borrowed from some of the Equipment listings, below (see p. 101), but players should also have the option to suggest even more creative and unique solutions based on what they've learned about their cell's quarry in a particular Hunt.
- **Exotics:** Rare or one-of-a-kind weapons and ammunition can be procured. These range from silver bullets to things like pre-Olmec obsidian daggers. The Difficulty of the test increases in the case of really rare or unique weapons, as determined by the Storyteller. The armaments are not inherently supernatural but can exploit special vulnerabilities of the quarry (as with those silver bullets).
- **Untraceable:** The weapons procured are completely untraceable and will never lead authorities or prey to the Hunters by themselves.

Fleet

Working either from their own garage or utilizing loyal and reliable contacts the Hunter is able to provide a wide variety of personal or commercial vehicles on short notice. This can be anything from a run-down '70s Volvo 242 to a Sikorsky helicopter, but not military vehicles such as tanks or attack aircraft.

Edge Pool: Hunters who keep and maintain their own fleet test Intelligence + Technology. Those who rely on contacts test Manipulation + Persuasion instead.

System: On a winning test at Difficulty 4 the Hunter is able to provide a single vehicle available for public or commercial use, including boats and aircraft. (The Storyteller is the final arbiter here, and really outlandish requests should at the very least be subject to increased Difficulty.) The test is made at the start of a scene, and the Hunter must have reasonable access to their garage or contact. The test can be attempted only once for each scene, and the vehicle can be used only for that scene. Subsequent tests in later scenes can provide the same or similar vehicles, though. Note that the Edge does not provide the ability to pilot vehicles provided, and the Storyteller must be the judge of what Skills and specializations are required for that.

Fleet Perks

- **Armor:** The vehicles provided can be armored to withstand small arms fire, being effectively immune to anything short of a mine or a rocket-propelled grenade. Flying vehicles benefit less from armor but will provide additional protection to passengers, adding two dice to their defense pools against ranged weapons.

- **Performance:** Vehicles provided with this perk have superior driving and handling, providing a bonus equal to the margin on the Edge test win to pursuit-related Driving tests. This bonus cannot exceed three dice.
- **Surveillance:** The vehicle comes with a broad range of concealed surveillance instruments, including directional microphones, radio band scanners, and thermal imaging sights. The equipment provides a dice bonus equal to the margin on the Edge test win to anyone performing stakeouts from the car, such as on Awareness or Technology tests. This bonus cannot exceed three dice.
- **Untraceable:** The vehicles procured are completely untraceable and will never lead authorities or prey to the Hunters by themselves.

Ordnance

The Hunter can build or otherwise get their hands on various types of timed or remotely detonated munitions, such as anti-vehicle mines, C4 explosives, or demolition charges. These tools are either built by the Hunter or available through one or many connections such as old colleagues or an arms smuggler with a lifetime debt.

For specific functions of explosives, see “Plastic Explosives” on p. 107.

Edge Pool: Hunters who build their own ordnance test Composure + Science. Those who rely on contacts test Composure + Streetwise instead.

System: On a winning test at Difficulty 4, the Hunter is able to provide a single mine or explosive. The test is made at the start of a scene, and the Hunter must have reasonable access to their supply cache or contact. The test can be attempted only once for each scene, and the charge can be used only for that scene.

Ordnance Perks

- **Multiple Payloads:** The Hunter is able to provide additional copies of the same ordnance up to the margin of the win. The devices provided all have the same perks (if any) and are subject to the same limited duration.

- **Non-Lethal Munitions:** This perk provides different kinds of non-lethal munitions, ranging from flashbang grenades to tear gas and even so-called “knockout gas”. (In a more realistic chronicle, the latter still risks the lives of those subjected to it, though.) The Storyteller is the final arbiter as to the exact effects of these substances on civilians, not to mention the prey and their servants. A good rule of thumb is dice penalties to all tests for those subjected, equal to the margin on the Edge test. This penalty cannot exceed three dice.
- **Exotics:** Rare or customized substances can be procured and weaponized. Examples include bombs releasing mist of consecrated water to mines laced with sandalwood splinters. The Difficulty of the test increases in the case of really rare or unique substances, as determined by the Storyteller. The devices are not inherently supernatural, but can exploit special vulnerabilities of prey.
- **Disguised Delivery:** The devices procured are disguised as everyday objects of appropriate size, resembling anything from cigarette lighters to portable air conditioners.The Difficulty to detect them is increased by the margin on the Edge test. This penalty cannot exceed three dice.

Library

Whether in the form of a musty library filled with centuries-old texts or a well-encrypted database encompassing the latest research on paranormal entities, the Hunter has access to a wealth of information on a wide variety of topics and creatures. Given time, the Hunter can use this to glean important clues on the behaviors, strengths, and weaknesses of their quarry.

Edge Pool: Resolve + Academics

System: A Hunter spending roughly a day researching their prey can make an Edge test. A win provides a clue into the nature or behavior of the type of creature, or even this specific prey. The Storyteller decides on the nature of the clue, and how vague it is, but the result should scale with the margin on the win: A greater margin equals more information, more accurate information, etc. No more than one attempt can be made for each scene, and once successful, the Edge cannot be used again until the next session.

Library Perks

- **Where They Hide:** In addition to the clue gained, the information yields a bonus equal to the margin on the win to any attempt to locate the lair of the prey. This bonus expires after use and cannot exceed three dice.
- **Who They Are:** In addition to the clue gained, the information yields a bonus equal to the margin on the win to any attempt to identify the prey (if they have the ability to pass for mundane, such as a human or animal). This bonus expires after use and cannot exceed three dice.
- **How to Halt Them:** In addition to the clue gained, the information yields a bonus equal to the margin on the win to any attempt to ward or otherwise protect an area or person, or hide them, from the prey. This does not apply to direct attacks. This bonus expires after use and cannot exceed three dice.
- **How to Harm Them:** In addition to the clue gained, the information yields a bonus equal to the margin on the win to any attempt to harm the prey by exploiting a supernatural susceptibility. This bonus expires after use and cannot exceed three dice.

Aptitudes

Some Hunters have talents and abilities that, while not supernatural, defy the norm of what other people can accomplish with skill and instruction. Whether through lifelong training, possession of unique equipment, or an experimental regimen received from their former employers, the Hunter has thrust themselves into the forefront of their field, able to perform veritable miracles to a layman's eye.

Some Hunters have talents and abilities that, while not supernatural, defy the norm of what other people can accomplish with skill and instruction.

Improvised Gear

By utilizing objects and materials in the near vicinity, the Hunter is able to devise any number of useful, if short-lived, tools to aid them or their comrades. Anything from a four-foot articulated periscope to splicing a surveillance camera's feed to a remote Bluetooth transmitter is possible, though the tool must be plausibly assembled from items available to the Hunter.

Edge Pool: Intelligence + Craft, Technology, or Science, depending on the type of tool or substance desired.

System: On a winning Edge test at Difficulty 4, the Hunter is able to create short-lived but helpful equipment from ordinary items. This equipment can assist in the use of a single Skill, providing a two-dice advantage. (The Storyteller is the final arbiter regarding which Skills can be augmented by equipment, and under what circumstances.) As well, it can make possible actions that simply wouldn't be possible otherwise, such as dumping camera footage to a cloud server or seeing over an obstacle. The creation can take anywhere from a few minutes to a couple hours, at the Storyteller's discretion, and not under duress such as during an ongoing firefight. Items created with this ability cease to function when the scene ends, and the Hunter can only create a single item each scene, unless they have the appropriate Perk.

Improvised Gear Perks

- **Frugal:** The Hunter is able to construct most items out of the trinkets and tools they carry, no matter how bare their location. This requires them to bring along a bag or other container of various bits and pieces, but as long as they bring it they can apply the Edge anywhere.
- **Mass Production:** The Hunter is able to create a number of additional items equal to the margin of the test. The items are all identical and augment the same Skill, and all other restrictions and Perks apply.
- **Specialization:** The Hunter can specialize in augmenting a particular Skill, providing a three-dice bonus instead of the regular two-dice bonus. This perk can be acquired multiple times, but only once for each Skill.
- **Speed Crafting:** Normally, this Edge cannot be used to improvise items under heavy duress, such as an ongoing physical conflict. With this Perk, the Hunter can craft a tool in three turns, minus the margin on the test, to a minimum of one turn, regardless of outside circumstances such as bullets flying.

Global Access

The Hunter is somehow able to circumvent the normal barriers to system intrusion and penetrate even the most secure digital systems. They might have worked for the government, memorizing backdoor access codes built into operating systems, or they've perfected a brute-force codebreaking chipset, or launched a prototype worm that now lies latent in every networked computer in the western hemisphere. Whatever the reason, the Hunter is able to accomplish feats of digital larceny well beyond normal "hacking."

Edge Pool: Intelligence + Technology

System: By spending the equivalent of a scene (a few minutes to a day, at the Storyteller's discretion) and succeeding at an Edge Test at Difficulty 4, the Hunter can gain access to any kind of data on any subject or person, in any conceivable system, ranging from surveillance to law enforcement to buried transactional records. Without Perks, this ability does not allow for the manipulation of data, though, and in the case of non-networked systems, the Hunter needs physical access to the local network.

Global Access Perks

- **Watching Big Brother:** The Hunter is able to not only gain access to but also manipulate digital surveillance footage, editing people out or adding them to the records.
- **All-Access Pass:** The Hunter can bypass electronic locks and disable or manipulate alarm systems and other security countermeasures. Difficulty is determined by the Storyteller and depends on security sophistication, usually between 3-5.
- **Money Tap:** The Hunter can manipulate financial data and move currency with the push of a button. This is most useful in depriving prey of assets, or arousing the suspicion of authorities, leading to financial investigations and other scrutiny. (The latter is also the usual outcome for Hunters who try to use this ability to line their own pockets....) The Storyteller is the final arbiter in this area, and any attempt to use this for their own gain should at least risk an increase of Danger. When used offensively, lower the target's Resources Background by one for each success in the margin. The reduction lasts for a month.
- **The Letter of the Law:** The Hunter can manipulate criminal records, both national and international. Enemies can become wanted criminals and the Hunter's own mistakes conveniently erased from federal and international databases. Difficulty ranges from 3 for local offenses to 5 or higher for crimes on a global scale, whether trying to plant the records or erase them.

Drone Jockey

Not only is the Hunter an expert in control and maintenance of remote-controlled mobile surveillance and security devices, they are also in possession of one that exceeds the performance of most commercial devices in the field, and they have the resources to repair and rebuild it should it suffer damage. The type of drone varies from ultra-fast flying surveillance models to burly quadrupeds capable of holding their own in a fight to swarms of microdrones almost invisible to the naked eye.

Edge Pool: Wits + Technology for control of drone, Intelligence + Craft to repair or rebuild it.

System: When acquired, the drone is equipped to perform two Skills. A rugged walker might possess Athletics and Brawl, while a covert surveillance flyer can have Stealth and Awareness. (The Storyteller is the final arbiter in this area; for example, a player needs to get really creative to justify a drone with Etiquette.) The type of drone used by the Hunter is determined at the acquisition of this Edge, but more variants can be acquired through Perks. The drone is controlled from a hand-held device or wired computer. When a controller tests the Skill of a drone, they use their Wits + Technology instead of the usual pool. Any time a drone is required to perform a Skill test for Skill they do not possess, use a one-die pool.

The drone comes with effectively unlimited range and can stay active for one day plus a number of days equal to the margin of an Intelligence + Science test at Difficulty 2. Drones have five health levels. Flying drones treat all damage as Aggravated, while ground-based ones treat all damage as Superficial (until the drone withstands damage that "rolls over" the tracker to Aggravated, as normal). By spending the equivalent of a scene the Hunter can test Intelligence + Craft at Difficulty 3 to repair a damaged or destroyed drone by a number of health levels equal to the margin of the test. A destroyed drone needs to be fully restored before it can be put to use again, and will be of the same model as its predecessor.

Drone Jockey Perks

- **Autonomous:** The Hunter is able to program simple behaviours into their drone, such as patrol-and-attack patterns or a tailing algorithm that allows them to shadow a target unnoticed. Complicated decision trees need a successful Resolve + Technology test at an appropriate Difficulty. Any Skills used while in this mode use a flat pool of five dice, rather than the Hunter's Wits + Technology.

- **Variants:** Each copy of this Perk allows an additional drone variant (complete with two Skills, which can differ among the variant drones) to be acquired. Only one drone can be active at a time, unless the Hunter also has the Autonomous Perk, allowing them to run extra drones on auto. This Perk can be learned multiple times.
- **Specialist Skill:** The drone can utilize an additional Skill. If the Storyteller agrees, this can also include tools that allow the drone to carry items or manipulate its environment. Examples range from Larceny (customized set of electronic picks) to Science (inboard automated lab and testing suite). This Perk only applies to a single drone model, but can be learnt multiple times.
- **Armaments:** A drone variant can be armed with the equivalent of a submachine gun or a taser, using a flat five-dice pool to use it. A Specialist Skill Perk (above) allows the controller to use their Wits + Technology when directly controlling the drone instead.
- **Payload:** The drone can carry a unit of cargo many times what its size suggests. Carrying cargo of greater size than the drone itself makes the drone travel more slowly and obviously, granting a two-dice bonus to those attempting to detect its presence or movement. The Payload Perk won't subdue resisting "cargo," and the size of the drone itself should be agreed upon by the Storyteller and player before it comes up in the story.

Beast Whisperer

The Hunter has a way with beasts that's the envy of veterinarians and animal handlers. They can understand, speak to, and inspire loyalty in certain types of animals, employing them as reliable companions and possibly even friends. Dogs are common, though some Hunters work with birds or even animals seldom seen domesticated, such as apes, depending on availability in their part of the world.

Edge Pool: Charisma + Animal Ken for commands and Composure + Animal Ken for training

System: On acquiring this Edge, the Hunter must choose one type of animal and which key action pools it possesses. (The Storyteller is the final arbiter. See p. 272 for examples.) The animal is considered utterly loyal and will accompany the Hunter into practically any situation, should the Hunter desire. They will obey simple commands such as "stay," "attack," or "hide," though commands that put it or the Hunter in danger require a win on a Charisma + Animal Ken test at Difficulty 4. The Hunter is considered to have several similar animals ready for final training, so if one dies they can quickly train another to take its place by spending the equivalent of a scene (and some amount of downtime) and succeeding on a Composure + Animal Ken test at Difficulty 4.

Beast Whisperer Perks

- **Incorruptible:** Through conditioning, medication, or unwavering loyalty, the animal is immune to supernatural powers that would otherwise sway it from its master's side.
- **Menagerie:** The Hunter can choose another animal type and add it to the available pool of animals they have available. Bringing more than one animal into the field is likely to attract increasing attention, though, so few Hunters bring more than one animal at a time.
- **Complex Commands:** The animal can understand and execute more complex commands, such as the retrieval of specific objects, keeping a lookout for certain individuals, as well as reporting to their master to the best of their abilities. Some can even count up to a few digits. Charisma + Animal Ken is used to give complex commands (Difficulty depending on complexity) while Intelligence + Animal Ken is used to understand the animal.
- **Incognito:** The animal can masterfully stay out of sight, hiding just out of observation range or blending in for practically any situation; unless someone looks for it, they will not know it is there. The Storyteller is the judge on which animals can plausibly employ this ability — It is unlikely that a horse would remain undetected in an office, for example.

Endowments

These Edges go beyond the natural. While Assets and Aptitudes exceed the mundane, Endowments defy it. These are abilities that, to the uninitiated, might appear as magic, divine intervention, or something superhuman. Whether they stem from a deep-rooted faith in the justness of Christ, Benandanti folk-magic practices handed down through generations, or experimental anti-boson technology too volatile to be made public, Endowments cross the border into the supernatural, and those that employ them are often met with distrust by their fellow Hunters, especially those who indiscriminately pursue anything perceived as "unnatural." After all, what makes a sorcerer different from a warlock?

> These are abilities that, to the uninitiated, might appear as magic, divine intervention, or something superhuman.

For those familiar with **Vampire: The Masquerade**, Endowments represent True Faith as well, though its expression is more nuanced and varies from wielder to wielder from the perspective of Hunter.

As mentioned in "Concepts and Flexibility," above, players have wide room to theme the details of these Edges. So long as the systems satisfy the troupe's need for fairness and consistency, "how it works" in the game-world is a matter of the player's preference.

Most Endowments rely on an object of focus — an item of strong symbolic or practical value, such as a Christian crucifix, a hawthorn talisman, or a gamma fluctuation reader, depending on the nature of the Hunter's Endowment. These objects are not unique and easily replaced, though, and a Hunter can carry or produce replacements with minimal effort.

Sense the Unnatural

By holding an object of focus, the Hunter is able to sense the presence of supernatural creatures within close vicinity, such as in the same room. Every Hunter experiences this differently, ranging from a smell of sulphur to a positive reading on their Double-V meter. The ability doesn't indicate who or what the creature is, only that it is close, and while it is possible to eventually pinpoint the source through successive readings, the Hunter is likely to attract attention while doing so.

Edge Pool: Wits + Occult or Science, depending on the nature of the Endowment.

System: The Hunter must achieve a win on an Edge test, with the Difficulty ranging from 3-5, depending on the type and power of the creature. The use is intentional and obvious (though see the Handsfree Perk, below), and the Hunter must hold (and possibly consult) their object of focus. Note that the power does not indicate who or what the creature is, only that it's close. Using the ability more than once per scene requires the expenditure of a point of Willpower for each additional attempt.

Sense the Unnatural Perks

- **Creature Specialization:** The Hunter gains a two-dice bonus to sense a specific type of creature, such as a vampire or a chupacabra. This Perk can be learnt multiple times, but only once for each creature type.
- **Range:** The range of the ability is extended to cover roughly the size of a city block. The Hunter can detect whether the creature is in the same room or beyond, but nothing more precise.
- **Precision:** The Hunter is able to determine exactly who among those present in a room is a creature of the supernatural. They are not able to determine the exact type, unless it is a creature they also have the Specialization Perk for.
- **Handsfree:** The Hunter no longer needs to rely on an object of focus to use this Edge. They've either learned to channel their supernatural sensitivity without the need for aid, or they've managed to miniaturize the technology to the size of an earbud.

Repel the Unnatural

The Hunter is able to use their object of focus to repel and terrify supernatural creatures. By brandishing or otherwise activating their object of focus, they can drive creatures many times their match away, using nothing but the power of faith or science.

Edge Pool: Resolve + Occult or Science, depending on the nature of the Endowment.

System: The Hunter must brandish their object of focus and succeed at an Edge test against a Difficulty set by the Storyteller. (Default is half the value of the creature's Composure + Resolve, or just the creature's standard Difficulty.) The creature can then be held at bay for as long as the Hunter remains stationary and wields their object of focus. While being repelled the creature cannot move closer to the Hunter or engage them in brawl or melee, but they can still defend themselves if attacked and are free to use other powers. If the Hunter moves, they need to win at another Edge test for each turn spent moving, using the same pool and Difficulty. If any of these tests fail, the hold on the creature is lost and the Edge cannot be used again on the same creature for the scene.

Repel the Unnatural Perks

- **Ward:** The Hunter can extend the area of protection to include an area roughly 2 meters around them, with an additional meter for each success in the margin. The creature affected cannot move closer to anyone in this area, nor engage them in brawl or melee.
- **Damage:** While this power is active, the Hunter can use their object of focus as a melee weapon with +0 damage, inflicting Aggravated damage to the creature under its effect. If used like this the Hunter must immediately retake the Edge test or its protective power fails.
- **Creature Specialization:** The Hunter gains a two-dice bonus to repel a specific type of creature, such as a werewolf or a gremlin. This Perk can be learned multiple times, but only once for each creature type.
- **Handsfree:** The Hunter no longer needs to rely on an object of focus to use this Edge. They've either learned to channel their supernatural sensitivity without the need for aid or they've managed to miniaturize the technology to the size of a fingernail.

Thwart the Unnatural

With this Edge the Hunter is able to resist all manner of supernatural abilities, leaving them immune to a wide variety of harmful mental effects. So long as they shield themselves with their object of focus they are highly resistant, if not outright immune, to unnatural influence.

Edge Pool: Composure + Occult or Science, depending on the nature of the Endowment.

System: So long as they hold their object of focus, the Hunter is immune to supernatural abilities that would otherwise require a resistance test. For abilities that would automatically affect them the Hunter instead may resist with an Edge test. In both cases, the Hunter must spend a point of Willpower to receive the benefits. This applies only to effects that target the Hunter specifically, and not to purely physical attacks or augmentations. For example, this Edge would protect the Hunter from vampiric mind control, but not from a rampaging werewolf attempting to tear their head off with razor-sharp claws. (The Storyteller must be the final judge in case of dispute.)

Thwart the Unnatural Perks

- **Creature Specialization:** The Hunter gains a two-dice bonus to resist a specific type of creature, such as a ghost or a hulder. This Perk can be learned multiple times, but only once for each creature type.
- **Ward:** The Hunter can extend the area of resistance to include an area roughly two meters around

them, with an additional meter for each success in the margin. Anyone in this area receives the benefit of this Edge, with the Hunter possessing it making all resistance tests as well as spending the Willpower.

- **Recognition:** On successfully resisting an ability, the Hunter is made aware of the attempt and what the power would have done to them. They should not receive actual rules, but instead receive hints as to the functions and perhaps limitations of the ability (this last subject to the Storyteller's discretion, such as on a high-margin win).
- **Handsfree:** The Hunter no longer needs to rely on an object of focus to use this Edge. They've either learned to channel their supernatural sensitivity without the need for aid or they've managed to miniaturize the technology to the size of a pair of glasses.

Artifact

Some rare Hunters possess a tool that for some reason — scientific, supernatural, spiritual, whatever — has properties that elevate it beyond items of similar ilk. Often, these are items from folklore or legend, inherited from generation to generation or unearthed through sheer accident. Sometimes they're even constructed by the Hunter themselves, employing forbidden knowledge or one-of-a-kind components that resist replication. Whether an 11th-century talwar quenched in the blood of a holy man, an urn containing an ever-blooming orchid, or a rifle possessed by the Hunter's dead twin, the Artifact is a power in itself, making its wielder a force to be reckoned with.

Edge Pool: Intelligence + Occult or Science, depending on the nature of the Artifact.

System: At the basic level, the relic provides the Hunter with a one-dice bonus to a single Skill associated with it when used. A blessed scimitar would provide its bonus to melee, while a prismatically augmented loup provides the same bonus to Awareness. This bonus never applies to Edge tests for the Artifact. The Artifact can be used as an object of focus (see previous Endowment Edges) if it meets the requirements. If lost or destroyed the Hunter can always regain it, but it is likely to involve an ordeal of story-length proportions.

Artifact Perks

- **Empower:** Once per scene, the Hunter can make an Edge Test at Difficulty 4 to increase the Artifact's dice bonus to three dice. If the test fails, the Hunter suffers superficial Willpower damage equal to the number of successes by which they failed.

- **Attraction:** The Artifact is sought after by any number of supernatural parties. It can be used as bait, and provides a two-dice bonus to any ambush attempts, as the prey becomes blinded by their desire to possess it. The Hunter can choose to keep it secret to avoid attracting attention, but once revealed it continues to lure those who know of its location. Alternatively, instead of supernatural attention, the player may elect to have the Artifact attract the attention of the org from which it was purloined or liberated, such as for a high-tech prototype or a potent religious relic.
- **Detection:** The Artifact reacts to the presence of the supernatural, similar to the Sense the Unnatural Edge. The Hunter must achieve a win on an Edge test, with the Difficulty ranging from 3-5, depending on the type and power of the creature. The use has to be intentional, and the Hunter must hold (and possibly consult) the Artifact. Note that the power does not indicate who or what the creature is, only that it is close. Using the ability more than once per scene requires the expenditure of a point of Willpower for each additional attempt.
- **Shield:** The Artifact shields the Hunter from harm by supernatural forces. While it is on their person, any physical damage sustained from supernatural sources is halved. (Or halved again, in the case of superficial damage.)

Weapons

Weapons rules in Hunter emphasize flexibility over specificity, and are designed to work with the narrative focus of the Storyteller System. In terms of Hunter's systemic focus, there's not a huge amount of difference between specific weapons so much as there are between weapon types — the primary benefit of a firearm is being able to put a hole in an enemy from a distance as opposed to providing a fine degree of detail on the nature of the hole. Still, being prepared is part of what makes Hunters who they are, so the Hunter weapon systems focus on different effects, pool modifications, and values.

If your troupe prefers very specific brand-name weapons, caliber differentiation, and weaponsmithing distinctions, feel free to fine-tune the generalized weapon traits to reflect subtler variations among these base types.

Base Weapons and Weapon Types

Add the weapon's damage rating to the margin on the winning attack roll for the total damage inflicted. (See "Conflict Pools" on p. 118 for more on making attack rolls and determining damage.)

EXAMPLE:

Malik fires his pistol at a vampire's ghoul minion, scoring three successes. His medium pistol has a +3 damage value, so the ghoul suffers a brutal six levels of Aggravated damage! That's what you get for being a vampire's lickspittle.

EXAMPLE:
Adam throws a stone cherub from a fountain at Pauline, scoring two successes. The Storyteller places the cherub at +3 damage — it is rather heavy — and thus Pauline suffers five levels of Superficial damage (which is halved, per the Superficial damage systems on p. 121).

Weapon Damage	Value
Improvised weapon, stake*	+0
Light impact (brass knuckles)	+1
Heavy impact (baton, club, tire iron, baseball bat) Light piercing (crossbow bolt, switchblade) Light gunshot (.22 pistol)	+2
Heavy melee (broadsword, fire axe) Medium gunshot (.308 rifle (single-shot), 9 mm pistol, shotgun at effective range)	+3
Heavy gunshot (12-gauge shotgun (close range only), .357 Magnum) Huge melee (claymore, steel beam)	+4

Special Properties

In addition to modifying damage, certain weapons and attacks can impart other effects on their targets.

For example, the stake on the weapons table (marked with a *) affects vampires in a special way. If an attacker with a wooden stake succeeds at a called shot to a vampire's heart and inflicts 5+ damage, the stake pierces the vampire's heart and paralyzes them. See p. 169 for more information on vampires and staking.

Certain Edges may impart special properties on weapons, such as changing their damage type, "pushing back" advancing supernatural creatures, or simply making a weapon more accurate (see p. 89).

As well, sometimes these additional properties are a part of what makes supernatural quarry so dangerous. These other properties are typically included in the descriptions of the individuals who wield them. Such special properties may belong to the weapons the quarry wields or to the quarry itself. (See the Antagonists chapter for more information and specific examples.)

Armor

Each point of armor changes 1 point of Aggravated damage from puncturing or bladed weapons (per damage roll) to Superficial damage, which is then halved as usual. This protection is in general only useful to humans (including Hunters), as many supernatural creatures already consider those types of damage Superficial.

Armor Type	Armor Value
Reinforced clothing/heavy leathers	2 (0 vs. firearms)
Ballistic cloth	2
Kevlar vest/flak jacket	4
Tactical SWAT/military armor (one-die penalty to Dexterity rolls)	6

Guns, Gear, and Other Goodies

Beyond weapons (and augmenting them), a number of technologies have emerged among Hunters, orgs, and other groups that have distinct use against supernatural quarry. How a given Hunter might procure these is a matter for exploration in chronicles: Some may have the Resources to do so, some might build or appropriate their own via Edges, and still other Hunters might, um, "find" such equipment in a cache that their Information Awareness Office counterparts "forgot about".

As with the weapons systems, above, this section isn't intended to be comprehensive. It includes a few key tools to get you thinking (and using your Edges) creatively.

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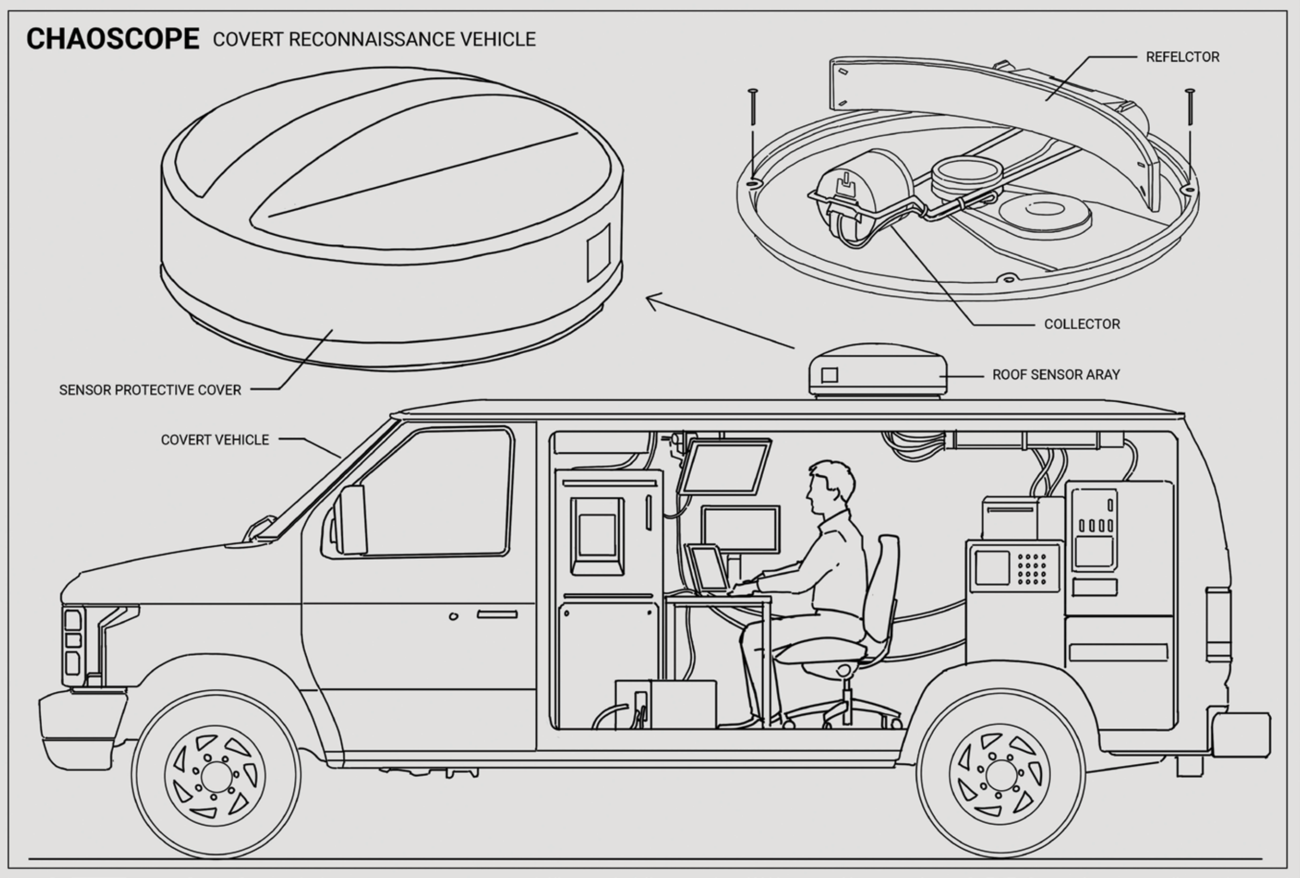


Chaoscopes

Coronal Halo/Analyzing Oscilloscopic Electromagnetic Differential Readers, to use their official name, detect disruptions in electromagnetic frequencies, including those caused by, or existing as, ghosts or demons or other types of Unusual Threats. Vampire blood has similar, though less obvious, resonances under chaoscopy. The NSA began modifying chaoscopes to detect "paradimensional infiltrators" in the 1990s, and some of those agents joined the various monster-hunting orgs once they learned what they were looking at. Vampires of different ages disturb different frequencies, so it takes diligence and precision to discern vampires and their blood-thrall minions from regular humans when using this device.

So far, chaoscopes can only be installed in place or used in dedicated trucks. Their range is classified at Storyteller's Eyes Only level.

The operator must make an Intelligence + Awareness test at Difficulty 6 to reliably detect a supernatural Unusual Threat with a chaoscope. If they have reliably detected a supernatural creature of the same type before, they can lower their Difficulty by -1.

EXAMPLE:

Agent Vasquez has detected a vampire before, so her difficulty to detect a subsequent vampire would be only 5. To detect a werewolf, however, the difficulty would still be 6.

XScopes

At their core, XScopes use simple technology to determine from a distance if someone is living or dead by looking for heartbeat, respiration, and body heat. Various orgs including the SAD, IAO, and BOPE-RJ have installed basic XScopes in numerous airport security scanners, set to send up a red flag to the duty agent if a blankbody trips them. Man-portable XScopes resemble large video cameras, and investigators often disguise them as exactly that. However, vampires have at times been able to deceive basic XScopes seemingly by forcing their undead bodies to mimic certain functions of the still-living.

Second-generation XScopes — mostly not in common use, though Heathrow, Reagan National, Da Vinci Airport in Rome, and other "critical installations" deploy them already — using specialized software to differentiate between natural blood flow and imitated life. For now, detecting "full" vampires from a nascent category of "thin-blooded" vampires remains just outside the technical threshold, though research and development departments of various defense manufacturers are pursuing several promising leads.

Vampires are occasionally able to confuse second-generation XScopes, but not with any reliable technique that operators can watch out for, and this means may in fact be supernatural. It seems that the older the vampire in question is, the more likely they are to be identified as such.

GPS Trackers

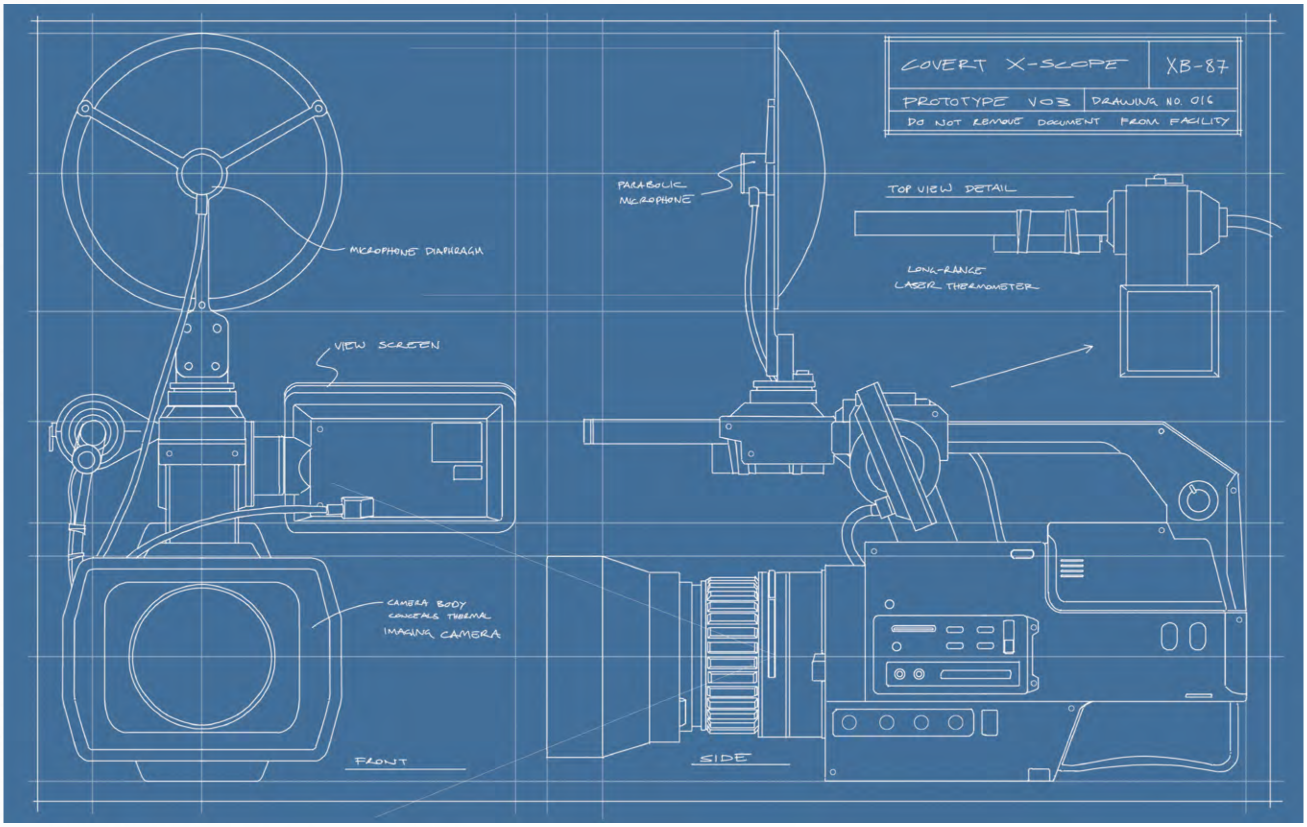
Many org operatives use GPS trackers to keep track of surveillance targets, and to keep tabs on their own personnel, especially infiltrators or others in high-risk positions.

GPS trackers affixed to vehicles are usually magnetic and smaller than palm-sized. Spotting one on a vehicle requires a successful Wits + Streetwise or Technology test, but removing it is simple. Personnel trackers are the size of a watch face, and usually sewn into clothing, worn inside shoes, or stuck to the underside of an actual watch. Finding them is a Difficulty 3 Wits + Streetwise or Technology test.

An active GPS tracker adds 4 dice to any test to locate the wearer.

Lockpick Gun

Lockpicking requires a delicate hand and extensive training. Or it requires a device that fires a steel rod at the lock, releases the cylinder, and sticks a fine metal


COVERT X-SCOPE
XB-87
PROTOTYPE V03
DRAWING NO. 016
DO NOT REMOVE DOCUMENT FROM FACILITY
MICROPHONE DIAPHRAGM
PARABOLIC MICROPHONE
TOP VIEW DETAIL
LONG-RANGE LASER THERMOMETER
VIEW SCREEN
CAMERA BODY CONCEALS THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA
FRONT
SIDE

rod in to open the lock. Much faster than normal lockpicking, a lockpick gun takes a matter of seconds to open a lock. It's also quiet: a soft punch-and-click sound.

While lockpick guns do exist, they're generally available only to governmental agencies or distinct professionals, though enough Resources or Streetwise will probably do the trick. They may be approximated with the Improvised Gear Edge or as a Specialist Perk for the Drone Jockey Edge. Having one discovered on one's person without reasonable credentials is also probably a great way to find oneself detained by authorities at the very least.

A lockpick gun adds 4 dice to a Dexterity + Larceny roll to pick a lock.

Restraints

Let's be honest: Hunters may find themselves using restraints, or they may find themselves being restrained. Restraints prevent a recalcitrant captive from exercising range of motion for their restrained limbs. Wrist or arm restraints prevent arm movement, obviously, while leg or angle restraints logically prevent the captive from running away or kicking their captors.

Zip cuffs are one-size-fits-all, and an individual can carry dozens or hundreds of them. They're great for busting a cult, and they're also a favorite of criminals and anti-government cranks staging deluded coup attempts. They require a Strength test (Difficulty 5) to break, but can be cut by knives (or monstrous talons) relatively easily.

Handcuffs are sturdier, and reusable. They require a Strength test (Difficulty 6) to break, or a Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 4) to slip free.

Tactical Earbuds

Tactical earbuds combine hearing protection — extremely valuable in environments with explosions, gunfire, and sometimes supernatural howls or shrieks — with communication. They balance out sound for clear audio and come with a microphone for clear, carrying speech among cell members. The most advanced models incorporate health monitors, reporting status to operational command.

Tactical earbuds also add 1 die to Composure tests in combat situations.

Conventional Weapons

Hunters may occasionally make use of specialized loadouts to subdue or destroy their quarry. Then again, sometimes the quarry finds themselves in possession of a fallen Hunter's weapons and can use them against the remaining members of their cell.

DISGUISED WEAPONS

Whether in the form of an anachronistic vampire's sword cane, an org operative's .22 caliber fountain pen, or even stranger contraptions conjured by techno-sorcerers, disguised weapons find increasing popularity in a world where violence is an omnipresent solution, but there is increased scrutiny of individuals via autocratic security forces, random police stops, and customs searches.

Making a disguised weapon uses Intelligence + an appropriate Specialty or Craft. Spotting one usually requires Wits + Awareness against a Difficulty of 1 + either the wielder's Stealth or the maker's Craft (whichever is higher). Because they cannot be properly balanced or shaped, they penalize the user one die from their attack pool unless the maker achieved a critical win on their crafting test.

I WISH THAT GUY OVER THERE WAS ON FIRE

Incendiary weapons are as effective against their victims as they are horrifying. Among vampires, they are anathema because of their lethality, the potential for collateral damage, unavoidable fear-frenzies, and crafting mishaps.

Against a suitably flammable target (read: vampires), Hunters using these weapons can come close to evening the odds. Of course, this is just another reason why vampires tend to flock to humans, hoping that the Hunters will seek to avoid collateral damage.

Home-made and black-market incendiary weapons often contain inferior substances and liquids such as fuel, fertilizer, and cleaning fluid. They reduce the weapon's damage value by one, though this damage becomes Aggravated for targets susceptible to fire — and that's almost everyone. On a total failure of the attack roll, an incendiary weapon sets the user's hands and face on fire (3 Aggravated damage).

Common tracer rounds don't contain enough incendiary material to cause significant Aggravated damage.

Storytellers, be careful about introducing incendiary weapons into a chronicle. When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail; when a Hunter has a flamethrower, everything looks like an invitation to set it on fire.

DRAGON'S BREATH ROUNDS

These powdered-pelletized zirconium-magnesium shells turn any pump shotgun into a flamethrower. Available in many American states, but illegal in most of Europe, Dragon's Breath ammunition appears on black markets wherever vampires have been indiscreet. Dragon's Breath shells have no damage bonus (+0), but turn the damage into Aggravated versus vampires, and incidentally set what they hit on fire (doing a point of Aggravated damage per round to the target until put out). With factory shells, a total failure on the attack roll jams the shotgun. They have an effective range of no more than 15 or so meters.

RAUFOSS

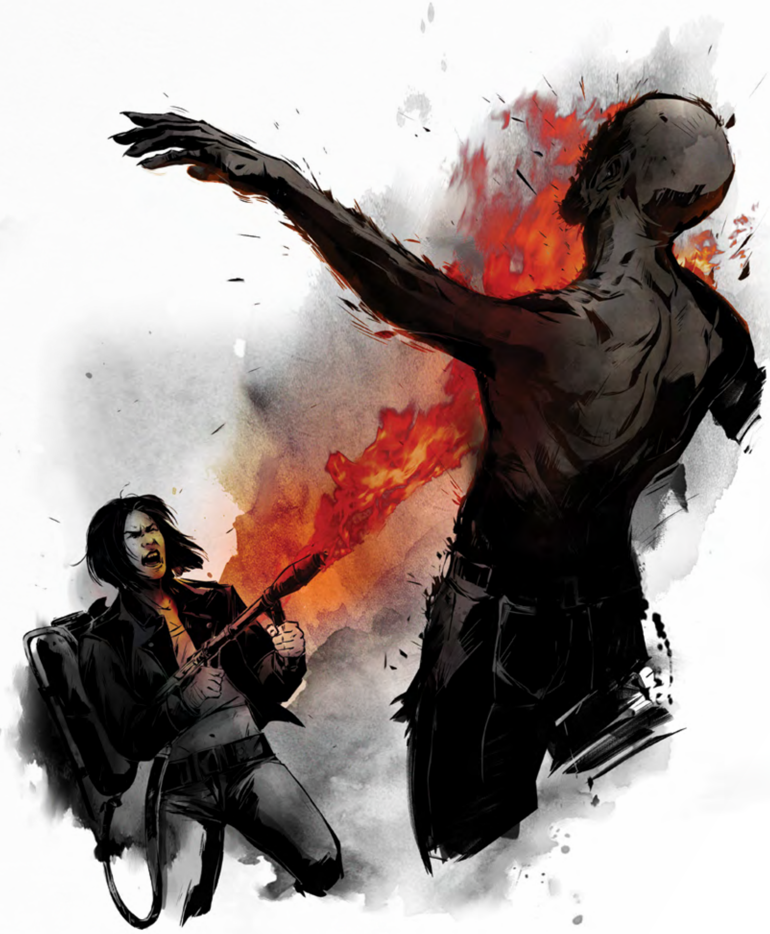
Incendiary explosive rounds, such as the Raufoss, are fortunately rare outside military hands, but do show up occasionally in Hunter and org arsenals. They have excellent range and armor-piercing capability, and usually come in calibers (12.7 mm) that make any target (up to and including armored civilian cars) have a really bad day.

Raufoss ignores any body armor, causing +5 damage, all of it Aggravated.

HAFLA

The original handflammpatrone is virtually nonexistent in the modern era, but it's not particularly difficult for a skilled artisan to approximate this one-shot weapon. About the size of a large flashlight, the hafla shoots a projectile up to roughly 80 meters that detonates in a large cloud of fiercely burning material.

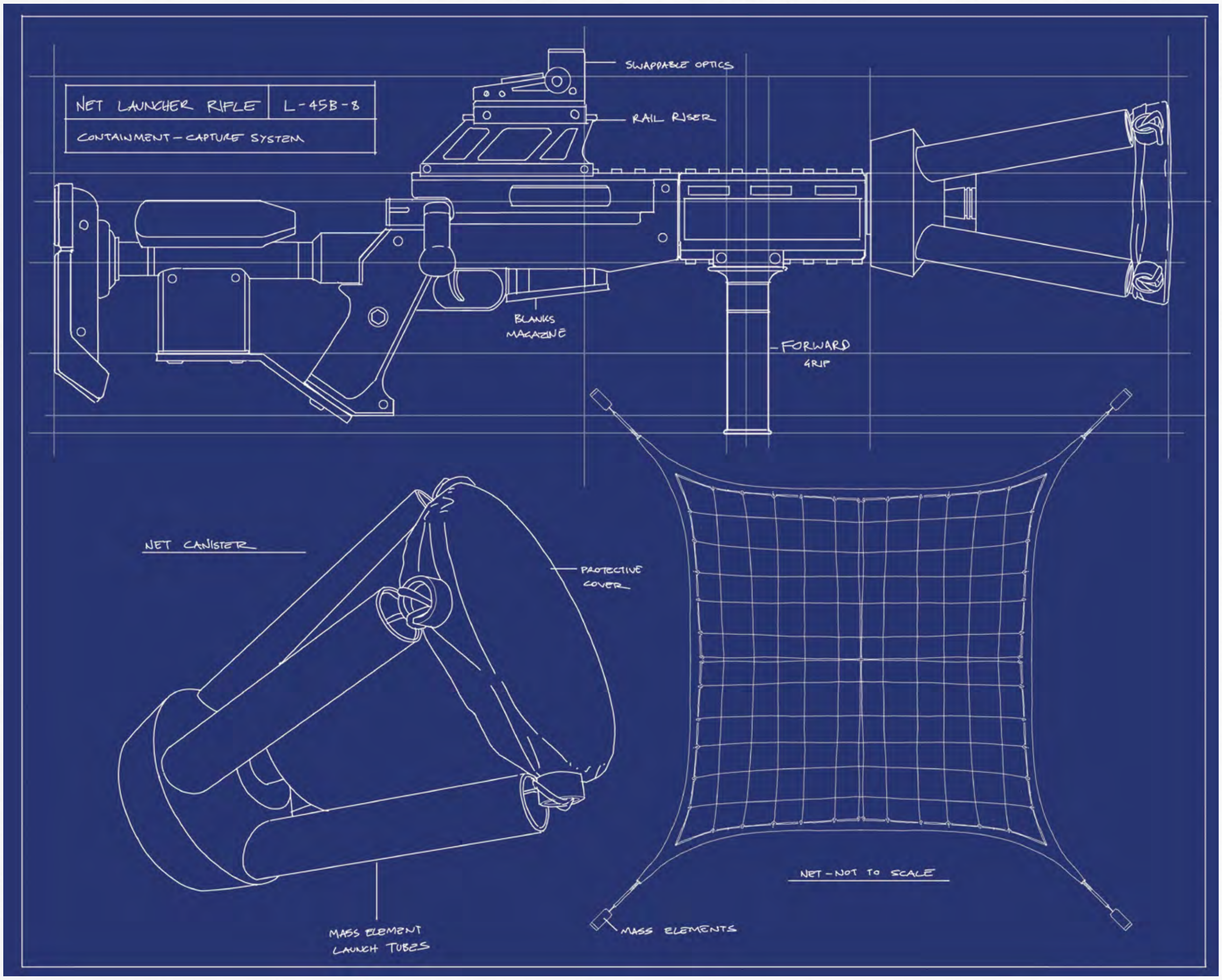
Successfully striking a target with a hafla is at least Difficulty 3. The target immediately takes three levels of Aggravated damage when struck, and three more Aggravated damage levels every turn thereafter. Only immersion in water (followed by removal of the material), sand, or similar will stop the burn.



FLAMETHROWERS

The backpack flamethrowers of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam are rare and bulky, while more modern commercial flamethrowers are a bit more streamlined and portable, and some aren't even regulated as weapons proper. All flamethrowers, though, can remove the "potential" from "potential collateral damage." Their range is limited, but the effects turn most battlefields into a raging inferno. Very few Hunters use these, as the potential for disaster is too great.

Flamethrowers deal +0 Aggravated damage when the target is struck and every turn thereafter. They also make everything in the environment burn, as they spray an indiscriminate cloud of flaming gas or liquid. Only immersion in water (followed by removal of the material), sand, or similar will stop the burn.


NET LAUNCHER RIFLE
L-45B-8
CONTAINMENT-CAPTURE SYSTEM
SWAPPABLE OPTICS
RAIL RISER
BLANKS MAGAZINE
FORWARD GRIP
NET CANISTER
PROTECTIVE COVER
NET - NOT TO SCALE
MASS ELEMENT LAUNCH TUBES
MASS ELEMENTS

MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

A proper Molotov cocktail is made not with a rag and gasoline, but with jellied petrol and a sparkler. The difficulty in anti-quarry use lies in getting the bottle to break upon contact with the target, and a wise user therefore often targets the ground in front of the victim, hoping to splash it with burning material.

Successfully striking a target with a Molotov cocktail is Difficulty 4, and causes two levels of Aggravated damage every turn. A win on a Composure + Survival roll (Difficulty 3) suffices to remove enough of the material (often including clothes) to stop the burn.

NET GUN

A straightforward device often used when hunting wildlife or for riot control, the net gun finds its way into the hands of Hunters who wish to slow down their quarry, and bestial quarry in particular. Nets fired from these small launchers are designed to entangle but also have an adhesive quality to their weave. Government and Corporate orgs have also been known to use flammable adhesive, and Vigilante hunters have improved their own flaming net-gun payloads.

Damage from a net gun subtracts from the target's Dexterity rather than Health, though it is halved as Superficial damage. A foe at Dexterity 0 is thoroughly entangled, and cannot attack. Tearing free of a net requires an action; roll a conflict of Strength + Athletics vs. a pool equal to the total successes from all previous net attacks.

Being on fire while entangled inflicts 3 Aggravated damage per turn. A win on a Composure + Survival roll (Difficulty 3) will stop the burn, but do nothing for the entanglement.

PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES

Plastic explosives like Semtex and C4 have the advantage in that they can be set well in advance and can be detonated at a distance using detonation cord or a timer mechanism: When the cord ignites or the timer triggers, a spark detonates the explosives. Teams of org operatives use them for breaching buildings where breaching rounds won't do the trick, or as traps. Alternatively, if an Unusual Threat is just too dangerous to take on, a few bricks of C4, and the complete destruction of a building over its lair, might do the trick.

For concussive blasts of regular bombs, treat the damage as superficial. Incendiary bombs or anti-personnel explosives deal Aggravated damage instead, but are usually of lower yield.

Setting plastic explosives requires an Intelligence + Technology roll. As a rough guide to usage, 200 grams of plastic explosive destroys a car, and inflicts 7 levels of damage (again, generally superficial unless incendiary or antipersonnel explosive is used). Add another 3 levels of damage for each additional 200 grams. The damage decreases by one for each three meters or yard (roughly) between the victim and the explosion.

For cinematic chronicles, the Storyteller can allow attempts to dive for cover (if cover is available) with a Dexterity + Athletics test, reducing the damage by one for each success. In a grittier or more realistic chronicle, you're probably not going to save yourself by diving away.

Coming into possession of something that functions along the lines of plastic explosives is a task in and of itself. See the Ordnance Edge on p. 92. ■

Chapter Four:

RULES

Order and simplification are the first steps towards mastery of a subject.
— Thomas Mann

Hunter: The Reckoning uses mechanical game rules to provide a reliable framework to the world. Neither the players nor the Storyteller want the Storyteller to make up everything as they go along, after all, or even follow a completely preplanned plot. Games require interactivity, and the rules help determine the outcomes of players' choices.

The most basic of these rules, and thus the fastest and cleanest to use in play, appear here. They are the core of the Storyteller System.

You can run the whole game using nothing but these rules, the character rules, and the rules for Hunters and their unique characteristics.

But here beats the heart of the matter, from rolling dice to throwing down to telling time.

Time

Time passes in the World of Darkness just as it does in our normal world, even if more of it seems to happen at night. That's because you don't need to play out every minute, or even every day, of the time that passes in your chronicle. One game session might last four hours of real time and cover two weeks of investigations and stealthy tracking or one car chase and combat — and it's all a matter of troupe style and story development.

Hunter uses five basic units to describe game time:

Turn: The amount of time needed to take a fairly simple action, such as returning fire against a SAD agent, searching a backpack, or attempting to kick down a door. Turns are abstract; they take as long as the action takes. Turns generally get shorter during action scenes and longer in social scenes. It takes longer to buy someone a drink than to fire a gun — in some bars, a lot longer.

Scene: Generally, a compact series of actions and interactions that take place in a single location or between a single set of characters. Staking out the gentlemen's club owned by the suspected vampire might constitute a scene, as might a series of phone conversations between a Hunter and their contacts in four different cities. You know how scenes work from plays, movies, and television. A scene contains as many turns as pacing requires; a scene containing pure dialogue or interaction might have no turns per se in it at all.

> As a rule of thumb, roll dice:
>
> - When an action's outcome is uncertain
> - When the degree of success or failure matters, or
> - When failure could yield an interesting complication.

Session: One game session, sometimes called a chapter. Hunter doesn't rely on this division of time as much as some games do, but it can provide regularity and balance to some rules' effects. It also has the advantage of being unambiguous: It's always pretty clear when you've stopped playing for the night.

Story: A full narrative arc, complete with introduction, rising action, and climax. Some stories can take several sessions to complete; others can be finished in one. Some short stories are effectively vignettes that are nothing more than a single scene. It might help to think of this as similar to a "season" of a television show.

Chronicle: A series of stories connected by the characters themselves and their ongoing narrative. Some chronicles possess a unifying theme or overarching plot. Others are a picaresque series of "one damned thing after another." Most chronicles maintain a common tone, be it brutal action, thrilling suspense, gangland espionage, operatic tragedy, or occult naturalism. Individual stories or chapters can shift tones within the greater context of the chronicle for variety's sake or to underline changes in the setting. For example, scenes occurring in a hinterland logging camp might have a sense of isolation or dangerous beauty, while smuggling a vampire's favored ghoul out of the hospital likely juxtaposes the antiseptic familiarity of a hospital setting with the urgency of the escape itself.

Using Dice

Story, not rules, governs a **Hunter** chronicle. Proper pacing can build a narrative to thrilling heights of tension, and slack pacing can kill even the deadliest horror. For this reason, Storytellers can change the mode of the game to suit their sense of pacing. Many scenes play just as well — and much faster — without rolling dice at all, as players and Storyteller riff on one anothers' contributions, dialogue, and actions.

As a rule of thumb, roll dice:

- When an action's outcome is uncertain
- When the degree of success or failure matters, or
- When failure could yield an interesting complication.

There's no need to roll the dice to "run fast," but when the characters need to run fast *and jump a gap between rooftops in the cityscape*, that's the perfect time to consult the Fates.

Don't think you need to roll them throughout an entire scene, either. You can roll them once and then play the scene toward the outcome you pre-determined with the dice at the beginning. ("Okay, looks like you got spotted by the trenchcoat guy. How will he do that?") This practice works especially well for dialogue scenes — roll at the beginning to see who wins the debate or if the suspicious security guard will be persuaded, then both players and Storyteller can shape their narrative toward the known result. Even combat scenes can work this way should the players and Storyteller prefer it.

In short, you can play any scene with lots of dice rolls, with one roll at the beginning or the end, or with no dice at all. Use the dice to help the story, not to dictate it.

Simple Tests

Most of the things characters do during a game happen without any rules governing them. Characters start cars, scrutinize strangers, search via Google, load weapons, cross streets, read books, and do a thousand other things as easily as anyone in the real world.

Even a commonplace activity, however, might require a dice roll if performed under stress, in a hurry, or against obstacles. And activities that invite stress, haste, and obstacles require dice rolls more often than not.

To begin, tell the Storyteller what your character wants to do. The Storyteller may just tell you that you succeed automatically: Sometimes skipping a roll just speeds up play, especially for an easy or average feat or something your character really excels at (see Automatic Wins on p. 114).

But let's say that the outcome is in question, such as when you want to do something harder than usual, like scaling a sheer cliff, reading a language in which you're not fluent, or picking the lock on a door. These are simple tests.

To determine how successful or unsuccessful such an action is, you make a simple test. Simple tests go like this:

- Describe what your character is trying to achieve and how.
- The Storyteller tells you which of your character's Traits to use to assemble a dice pool.
- The Storyteller sets a Difficulty. This number may be kept secret, depending on circumstances and playstyle.
- Unless the test is an automatic win (see p. 114), you roll the dice pool and count your successes. Every die that shows 6 or higher is a success. (A 0 on the die means a result of 10: a success.)
- If the number of successes you get equals or exceeds the Difficulty, you win the test and accomplish that action.

EXAMPLE:

Volkan's character is questioning the employees at the brewery to see if they've noticed anything strange about recent shipments. The Storyteller decides this is a simple Resolve + Investigation test with a Difficulty of 2: straightforward. Volkan's character has 3 dots in Resolve and 3 dots in Investigation and so he rolls 6 dice, getting three successes, which is more than enough for a win. The Storyteller gives Volkan the info he sought: Every other Thursday, there's a "second dispatch" that unmarked trucks come to collect long after business hours.

Dice Pools

A dice pool is a number of dice used to determine an action's margin of success or failure. It is determined by one or more Traits.

The Storyteller tells you which combination of Traits creates your dice pool, the number of 10-sided dice you will roll, for any action. Traits usually have ratings between 0 and 5, so pools generally range from one die (the minimum pool size, if you can roll at all) to ten dice or more.

In general, actions use a Skill pool (Attribute + Skill), but a few use only Attributes to build the pool. Often an Attribute pool represents a straightforward test of the given Attribute: Strength + Strength to wedge open a closing cargo-elevator door, for example. Sometimes, two Attributes combine to make a pool, such as Resolve + Composure tests to resist many supernatural effects (p. 167). A character who lacks a Skill rolls only the pool's Attribute, with no additional penalties.

In very specific cases, Traits other than Attributes or Skills will form the basis of a dice pool.

When you've determined your dice pool and the Storyteller is ready to interpret the results of your action, take a number of 10-sided dice (d10s) equal to the pool value and roll them.

EXAMPLE:

Maya's character wants to cajole a Monster-X account executive to gain access to his case briefing. She has three dots of Charisma and two dots of Etiquette, and thus possesses a pool of five dice.

Especially when dealing with social actions such as seduction or diplomacy, don't force the dice into the path of the roleplaying. If a player's character says something particularly inspired (or painfully wrong), opens with a truly tempting (or utterly insulting) gambit, or offers a cunning (or transparently false) explanation, the Storyteller should feel free to modify the Difficulty or even let the character succeed (or fail) without involving dice and Traits.

The Storyteller should perhaps warn a character with a high Trait away from a disastrous approach — "Given your knowledge of Medicine, you're pretty sure that reaching into the container of medical waste would be very risky." But even a one-dot Skill can shine if the player applies the right polish.

The Difficulty is the number of successful dice required to accomplish a task. The target number for individual dice rolled is always 6 or higher.

Special Cases

Desperation Dice: In certain cases, Hunters will add Desperation Dice to their pools, to augment the result. See p. 127 for more details.

Specialties: Characters may possess greater aptitude or expertise in one particular aspect of a Trait. If a character attempts an action that falls within one or more of their Specialties for the Trait used, they gain one extra die for their dice pool. For more on Specialties, see p. 61.

Trackers and Pools: Certain Attributes directly relate to three special pools called trackers:

- Health equals Stamina + 3.
- Willpower equals Composure + Resolve.

Tracker pools go up and down as characters spend from them or take damage to them. Tracker pools cannot exceed their starting value, as determined by their component Traits.

If the Storyteller calls for a roll using a tracker, the dice pool equals the current undamaged pool of that Trait, not the tracker's full rating. No dice pool can fall below 1 (see "Modifiers," below), so a roll for an empty pool still yields one die.

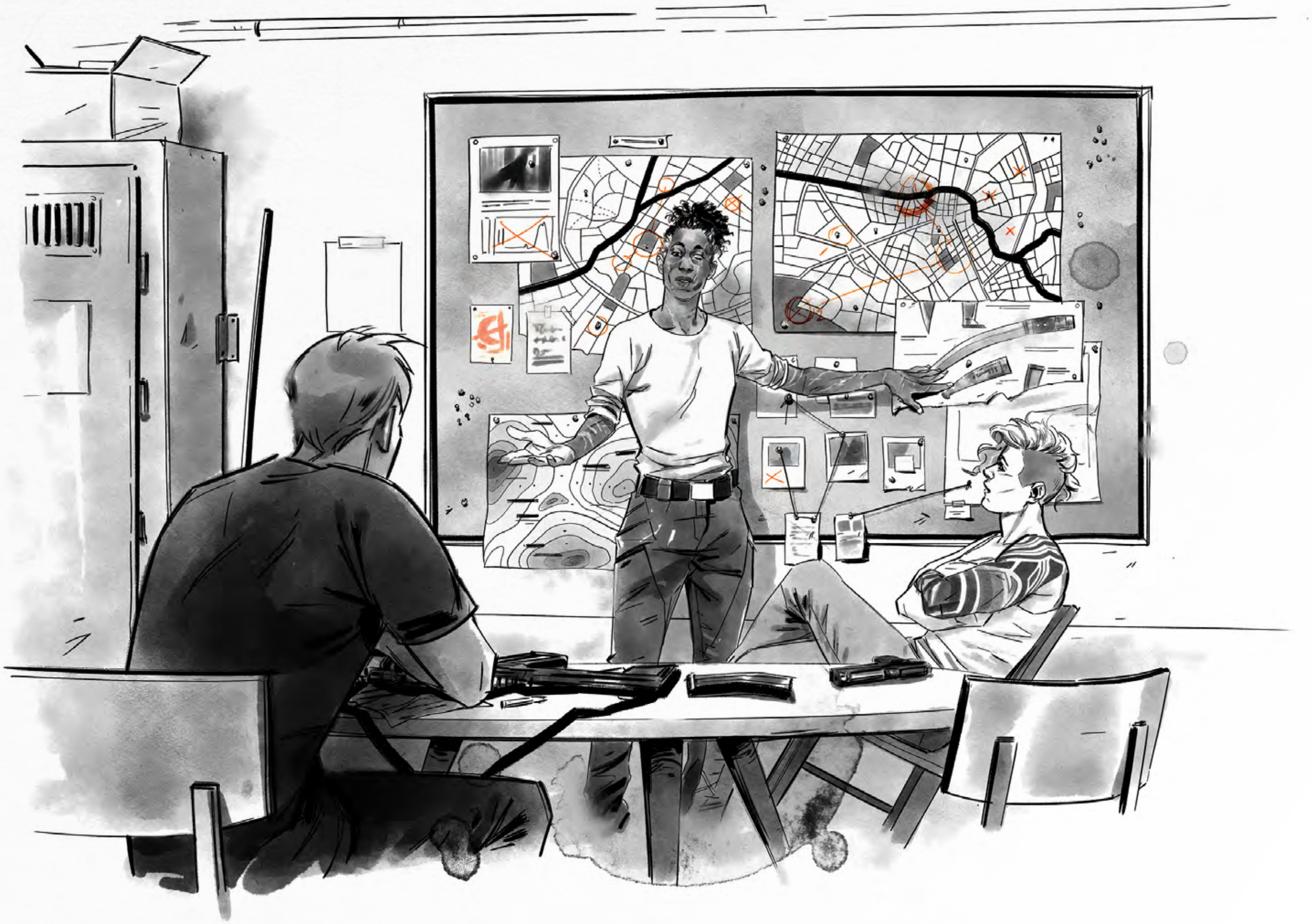
EXAMPLE:

Stefan has a Willpower of 6 but has spent 2 points this session, so his player would roll four dice, not six, for a Willpower roll.

Difficulties and Target Numbers

The Storyteller determines the Difficulty of the action a player wishes to attempt, expressed in terms of how many successes they need to "win" that attempt — that is, to accomplish that action. See the table below for some examples of actions and the Difficulty to accomplish them.

The Difficulty is the number of successful dice required to accomplish a task. The target number for individual dice rolled is always 6 or higher.



EXAMPLE:

Terrence has a dice pool of five and the Storyteller has determined that the Difficulty is two. Terrence will need two of his five dice to show a 6 or higher on the roll.

Remember that the duration to perform an action may vary, so the roll itself may represent a few seconds, an entire scene, or even longer. It takes longer to walk a tightrope than to fire a gun.

Note, too, that sometimes a given action is literally impossible. For example, attempting to log in to a detective's email account without a computer isn't going to happen. This is usually a question of common sense, but the Storyteller is of course the ultimate arbiter of such.

Difficulty of Action	Number of Successes
Routine (striking a stationary target, convincing a loyal friend to help you)	1 success
Straightforward (aggravating someone who's already spoiling for a fight, intimidating a weakling)	2 successes
Moderate (leaping a gap between two rooftops, persuading a disinterested bus driver to hold the bus)	3 successes
Challenging (locating the source of a whisper, creating a memorable piece of art)	4 successes
Hard (convincing a cop that this isn't your cocaine, placating a hostile ghost)	5 successes
Very Hard (running across a tightrope while under fire, calming a hostile and violent mob)	6 successes
Nearly Impossible (finding one specific homeless person in Los Angeles in one night, flawlessly reciting a long text in a language you don't speak)	7 or more successes

Modifiers

The Storyteller might decide to add or subtract a modifier to any dice pool. Hunter has two basic types of modifiers:

- **Change the size of the dice pool:** This modifier reflects a change or circumstance for the character: They are drugged, they use a Specialty, they appear terrifying, etc.
- **Alter the Difficulty:** This modifier generally reflects an external change or circumstance for the action: rainy weather, badly maintained or superior equipment, performed under gunfire, at a loud concert, etc.

In general, shifting the dice pool up or down by two dice has the same statistical effect as decreasing or increasing the Difficulty by 1.

Storytellers should use common sense when stacking modifiers. Unless extreme circumstances apply (in which case, is the roll necessary?), cap modifiers at plus or minus 2 to the Difficulty, or at three dice added or removed from the character's pool. This guideline applies to ad hoc Storyteller modifiers, not to modifiers from Specialties or other specific rules.

Penalties can never cause a pool to drop below one die.

Automatic Wins

If a character's dice pool is twice the task's Difficulty, the Storyteller may opt to rule that the character wins automatically without a dice roll. Automatic wins streamline play and reduce distracting rules interludes.

Apply automatic wins as much as possible, especially outside of combat or for tests where character failure creates no interesting outcome: information-gathering tests, conversation-openers, or gambits that open up the scene or let it move forward dramatically. They are especially valuable to Storytellers, as they allow the Storyteller to determine where chance should play a factor and where certain outcomes are good enough to move the story forward.

Automatic wins shouldn't often apply in combat or other stressful situations. However, a Storyteller willing to speed up opening rounds or to blow through a location they didn't intend to be challenging, might allow automatic wins against lesser antagonists such as individuals with poor morale or mindless creatures. Roughing up the vampire's butler may well inspire the rest of the mansion's staff to GTFO; getting punched or shot isn't worth the pay.

TAKING HALF

Storytellers may opt to "take half" instead of making a roll. To take half, count the number of dice in the opposition pool, divide it in half, rounding down, and treat that as the number of successes the opposing individual attained.

Knowing when to use this technique is part of the Storyteller's craft. Taking half saves time and reduces rolls, and therefore uncertainty. In most cases, taking half applies to Storyteller characters actively opposing players' characters, but other circumstances may arise in which the Storyteller prefers to take half, to maintain the momentum of a scene.

EXAMPLE:

Gloria's character is hiding from a security guard and attains three successes on her Stealth roll to evade notice. The Storyteller sees that the security guard has an Awareness pool of four and takes half to keep the scene flowing. Taking half of the pool of four means the security guard counts as having two successes on that Awareness roll, so with her three Stealth successes, Gloria's character remains unnoticed… for now.

Storytellers are also encouraged to let players take half, counting half the dice pool as regular successes, rather than rolling in cases where the player wants to ensure a win on an easy test and failure or the margin of success isn't likely to be significant in a narrative sense. To keep things interesting, Storytellers should keep the exact Difficulties of tests secret, though descriptive hints such as "this seems really beneath you" or "you're not sure you can crack this without serious effort" are all fine.

Opposition

Characters sometimes attempt actions that a Storyteller character opposes, such as hacking a bank's monitored computer system, sneaking past a guard, or intimidating a nightclub promoter who has seen this exact sort of bullshit a million times.

The Storyteller can choose to define those actions as contests (see p. 117), but for speed of play they might prefer to represent the opposition with a static Difficulty number. They can determine that Difficulty several ways, using whichever one is fastest:

- Decide on a Difficulty according to the table above.
- Divide the Storyteller character's corresponding dice pool in half, rounding down (see Taking Half, p. 114).
- Decide the target Storyteller character's relevant opposing Skill or Attribute and use that as the opposing Difficulty. Even if the foe's relevant Trait is zero, the Difficulty is 1. Skill and Attribute ratings of 2 or 3 are the most common; most people pose little challenge to trained or otherwise very capable fellow individuals.

Dice Pool Results

When you roll a dice pool, every individual die result of 6 or higher is a success, including a result of 10 (represented as 0 on most d10s).

If you roll a number of successes equal to or exceeding the Difficulty number, that's a win.

Hunters can also achieve states of Overreach or Despair. See p. 128 for more information on Desperation Dice and their outcomes.

Criticals

A result of 10 on two regular dice (0, 0) is a critical success. A critical success counts as two additional successes above the two 10s — so that's four total successes. This represents the character performing exceptionally well. A winning roll containing at least one critical success is called a critical win, or sometimes just a critical. Be sure to acknowledge the critical win narratively, as the character performs their task quickly, stylishly, or with a brutal finality!

Each pair of 10s counts as its own critical success, so three 10s (0, 0, 0) would add up to five successes, whereas four 10s (0, 0, 0, 0) would count as eight.

In some tests, a critical win yields additional effects apart from the one stated above, and the Storyteller can even award complete wins regardless of Difficulty when a situation merits it.

CRITICALS IN PLAY

The Storyteller should get used to critical successes showing up in play. With larger dice pools, they become more and more common: A ten-dice pool has a slightly higher than 25 percent chance of rolling a critical success. Of course, a ten-dice pool represents someone at the absolute pitch of human perfection — or someone who has worked the odds carefully enough (or perhaps drawn on enough supernatural power…) to resemble perfection.

Be aware of this when adding extra dice to players' pools – if a critical seems like it might break suspense or harm the narrative, just lower the Difficulty instead. Mathematically, lowering the Difficulty by 1 is the same as adding two dice to a character's pool.

But that said, our advice is to lean into criticals. They allow players to show off their characters, and even when the opposition gets them, they produce rapid, dramatic effects — kind of ideal, we think, for stories of Hunter calling upon inspirational Drives to stand against supernatural horrors.

Margin

The number of successes exceeding the Difficulty of the roll is called the margin. If the Difficulty was 4 and you rolled seven successes, your margin is three. Damage, many Edge effects, and some other rules use margin to calculate the degree of effect.

Even outside those circumstances, the Storyteller should narrate a degree of success depending on the size of the margin rolled: the larger the margin, the greater the success. For example, if a roll to investigate results in no margin, a player's Hunter discovers the clue, but the above three-success margin on a roll to investigate would yield the clue quickly, undetectably, or might even turn up more information.

In an Automatic Win, the margin is always zero.

Total Failure

If your roll includes no successes at all, your character has totally failed. Total failure sometimes means only that your character didn't achieve the desired result. At other times it means dire consequences occur. The Storyteller defines what total failure means according to each situation and circumstances, and decides whether you can try again after a total failure.

Remember, too, in a narrative sense, failure is a consequence of trying something. Even though an attempt to do something has failed, that failure can create interesting outcomes, and prompt subsequent choices. Once you fail to avoid arrest, what happens next is probably pretty memorable.

EXAMPLE:

Sam rolls no successes when flirting with a gregarious dancer at the music festival. The guy just ignores her and capers away, meaning she and her cell will have to figure out some other way to get close to the suspected changeling to confirm or deny their suspicions.

USING THE HUNTER DICE: REGULAR DICE

Blank face = **1-5** = Failure

🔥 = **6-9** = Success

🔥 = **10** = Success, potential critical win

USING THE HUNTER DICE: DESPERATION DICE

! = **1** = Overreach or Despair (see p. 128)

Blank face = **2-5** = Failure

🔥 = **6-9** = Success

🔥 = **10** = Success, potential critical win

Permutations

The following systems allow for variations on the core resolution systems. Storytellers are encouraged to employ these as opportunities to build nuance and purpose into the outcomes of dice rolls, and also to build a sense of common purpose among the players' cells.

Teamwork

By the nature of what they do, Hunters are disposed toward helping members of their cell. If two or more characters can effectively work together on a task, such as sabotaging a server farm or running down quarry in a chase through mazelike alleys, roll the largest pool among the participants, adding one additional die for each character assisting who has at least one dot in the Skill involved. If no Skill is involved, anyone can assist.

Win at a Cost

If your roll includes any successes, but still fails, the Storyteller may offer you a win at a cost. In such a win, you achieve your goal, but something happens to make things worse for you anyway: You take damage, attract unfriendly (and powerful) notice, lose something you value, etc. You or any other player can suggest the cost, but the Storyteller is the final arbiter. Generally, winning at a cost should scale with the number of missing successes. If it's too high, you can always opt to fail instead.

EXAMPLE:
The cell has infiltrated a magazine sales racket that's obviously a cult, and its members scatter out from under the collapsing walkway of the derelict motel housing it. One of the Hunters attempts to vault a rusted railing but doesn't quite accomplish a win, so the Storyteller instead offers that character's player the option to lose their mobile phone in the escape. The player can decline, but the character would suffer damage from the walkway. Quite a quandary!

Try, Try Again

If a character fails an action, they can usually try again unless some circumstance actively prevents them. After all, failing to pick a lock doesn't mean the character can never insert a lockpick into that door again. To justify such an attempt, the situation must merit it — the character obtains a better set of lockpicks, for example, or their skill has improved, or time simply isn't an issue and they can make another attempt.

Characters can repeat most actions in combat, chases, or other conflicts. Conflict is inherently stressful, and failure often carries its own cost in such circumstances.

Spending Willpower

Characters may spend 1 point of Willpower to re-roll up to three regular dice on any one Skill or Attribute roll, including a roll involving Edges or other special advantages. Characters may not spend Willpower to re-roll Desperation Dice or a tracker roll, such as rolling Willpower itself. A spent point of Willpower counts as having sustained a level of Superficial damage to Willpower (see p. 123) and is marked as such.

For more on Willpower, see p. 60.

Describing Roll Results

After a test is resolved, describe what happens in vivid detail, according to the circumstances. This is the narrative of what has happened — for better or worse. Let your words be guided by the result of the dice, the mood you're going for, the personality of the character acting, and the specific circumstances of the situation. The player and the Storyteller are encouraged to help each other out in descriptions, but ultimately the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what the result of any given test or check is.

Contests

Storytellers use contests to model direct opposition: e.g., negotiating with a truculent customs importer, sneaking past a guard dog trying to snuffle out your location, or seducing an investigative reporter.

In a contest, the acting character and their opponent each determine their dice pool. This process does not have to use the same pool; the Storyteller might tell the sneaking character to use Dexterity + Stealth, but roll Wits + Awareness for the guard dog.

Basic contests go like this:

- Describe what you want your character to do and how.
- The Storyteller decides someone opposes your effort and tells you which of your character's Traits to use to assemble a dice pool.
- The Storyteller chooses which of the opponent's Traits to use to assemble a dice pool.
- Each contestant rolls their dice pool and counts their successes.
- If the acting character rolled equal to or more than the number of successes rolled by the opposing character, the test is a win.

Players' characters can definitely engage in contests against each other! The Storyteller still determines which character assembles which dice pool, however.

Conflicts

Situations involving basic contests that result in damage — physical or mental — are called conflicts. The basic conflict rules value simplicity and speed of play, and they apply to any hostile interaction, from shotgunning one's way across a haunted moor to a vituperative disagreement with the grande dame at a nightclub. Storytellers and players should invest these basic conflicts with as much narrative detail as they like, clothing the bare dice results in rich narrative context and detail.

For more advanced conflict systems, see pp. 120.

The Conflict Turn

Conflict happens in a flurry of blows, rhetorical or physical. When each participant in the conflict has acted once (or declined to act), that defines a turn. Turns take as much time as the narrative indicates they should. A single puissant stroke of a cursed dagger might happen in less than a second and end a fight, while a point-and-counterpoint debate of the finer details of creeds and causes against a fellow Inquisitive may take an hour or more. Thus, one roll does not necessarily represent one swing of a baseball bat, unless the Storyteller says it does.

At the start of every turn of the conflict, each player declares their intent: what they want to achieve. This can be anything from trying to tackle the driver of an escaping motorcycle, to confounding a hotel concierge so the rest of the cell can escape with the vampire's victims, to simply taking cover.

EXAMPLE:

Fabian, Tracy, and Leah have been ambushed in the bowels of a medical research facility, and they are now fighting for their lives. Going left to right across the table, the Storyteller asks them to describe their intended actions. Fabian wants to dive for cover, Tracy plans to activate an Edge, and Leah seeks to gut the blood-crazed bat-thing gnawing on her.

Once all players have decided on their course of action, the Storyteller makes the same decisions for the antagonists (and any Storyteller character allies) and then tells the troupe which dice pools to build. The players then roll to attempt it.

EXAMPLE:

No one attacks Fabian, Tracy is charged by her target, and the bat-thing continues attacking Leah.

Conflict Pools

The dice pool each participant uses in a conflict turn is called their conflict pool. In a fight, the conflict pool might be Strength + Brawl or Composure + Firearms; in a debate, it might be Charisma + Persuasion or Manipulation + Etiquette. Characters might change pools during a conflict, such as if they pick up a tire iron or change debate tactics from flattery to bullying.

EXAMPLE:

Jennifer shoots at her character's enemy using Composure + Firearms against her enemy's Dexterity + Athletics, while Malik engages in a Strength + Brawl vs Dexterity + Melee contest with a machete-wielding bravo.

Both the attacker and defender roll their pools simultaneously in a basic conflict. As with other basic contests, the side that scores the most successes wins their turn of that conflict. The winner subtracts the loser's successes from their total and applies the remainder as damage to one of the loser's trackers: Willpower or Health (see Damage, p. 121).

If the conflict is one-sided, such as when the defender is trying to avoid getting shot, only the attacker can inflict damage. If both participants are able to cause harm to their opponent, the conflict is two-sided, with both sides counting as attackers. In this case, the actions of both parties are merged into a single conflict roll. A tie results in both parties inflicting damage on the other with a win margin of one.

RANGED WEAPONS

Ranged combat is resolved as a contest, usually vs. the defender's Dexterity + Athletics. In cases where two

combatants are attacking each other at range, you can resolve it as a two-sided Firearms conflict as above. Standard ranged attacks assume that the subject has access to limited cover, such as a car or the corner of a building. A character with no available cover subtracts 2 from their defense pool, whereas superior cover (sandbags, concrete fortifications and similar bullet-proof obstacles) merits a bonus of 1-2.

DODGING

When engaged in a Brawl or Melee conflict, the defender can always opt to use their Dexterity + Athletics instead of a combat skill to defend. If they do, they inflict no damage on the opponent, no matter the margin, if they win. Sometimes it's best not to agitate the werewolf any further.

MULTIPLE OPPONENTS

In a conflict where teaming up makes sense, a character facing multiple opponents loses one die from their pool when they defend against each successive opponent that targets them. This applies only to situations where the character strictly evades additional attacks.

To attack and deal damage to multiple foes, a character must instead split their dice pool, dividing it among those they wish to engage. Do not apply the dice pool penalty to split pools, but any opponents not attacked are defended against as normal: full pool minus a die for each previous opponent.

EXAMPLE:

Tony's character is fighting three roughnecks on an oil rig. With Dexterity 3 and Brawl 4, his character's conflict pool for dodging is 7 against the first guard's attack, six dice against the second guard, and only five dice against the third. He will only be able to deal damage to the first opponent. If he wants to attack two of the rig workers during the turn, he must split his seven dice into two pools: four dice and three dice, for example. He would then defend against the third roughneck with five dice — his full pool, minus one for each previous opponent.

WHO GOES FIRST?

This question mostly arises during physical combat — in debates, having the last word may be more valuable than dropping the first allegation.

Unless one side has surprise (usually resulting from a success on an earlier test, perhaps of tactics or sneaking to set up an ambush) characters, act in descending order of action:

- Close combat between already engaged parties, then
- Ranged combat, then
- Newly initiated physical combat, then
- Anything else that might be transpiring

If necessary, break ties by comparing Dexterity + Wits, or if equal, by dots of the Skill used.

EXAMPLE:

In the conflict above, Leah fights simultaneously with her attacker, since they are mutually engaged in close combat. Tracy resolves before her attacker, since ranged goes before initiated close combat. Whether Tracy goes before Leah or not is moot. It doesn't matter when Fabian resolves his action since no one is interacting with him.

For troupes desiring a more traditional initiative system, see p. 118.

THREE TURNS AND OUT

We strongly recommend ending conflicts after roughly three turns, unless everyone is still having fun. Too much dice rolling slows down the drama and becomes harder and harder to describe creatively. The World of Darkness games don't focus as heavily on the wargaming roots of the hobby as do some roleplaying games, and they intentionally sacrifice a bit of tactical detail in favor of "chunkier" definitive outcomes.

Still, part of the Hunt is the engagement. If the Storyteller and players want the old-school feeling of fighting down to the last Health box, they're welcome to do so, of course. But for the rest of us, here's a few ways to decide who won if you've gone three rounds and both sides are still standing.

- Allow the players to break the conflict off if they want. The Storyteller may call for a basic contest to do so (for example, Strength or Dexterity + Athletics to flee or Composure + Etiquette to divert the discussion), or their foes may simply let them leave. The roll here is to suggest context and prompt narrative detail to describe the end of the combat.
- If the characters' foes have taken more losses — or even an unexpected amount of damage — the Storyteller can simply decide that they break off the conflict, as above. Not everyone wants to fight to the death with a pack of fanatics who push themselves beyond reasonable boundaries.
- Simply award victory to the side that won the most contests or to the side with the fewest points of Aggravated damage. The Storyteller narrates the end of the conflict based on the results of the previous contests. Ideally, if the players' characters lost, they have a chance to flee or at least to surrender with some dignity.
- Change the situation. Perhaps some new, third force enters the scene, such as an org strike team, or a drunken motley of pub crawlers. Perhaps the conflict simply changes venue from the alley to a nearby warehouse or from the top of the mesa into the river valley below. The change should present new options to both sides.
- Use a single roll to determine the conflict's outcome, and then fill out that outcome with narrative detail (see "Using Dice" on p. 110).

Damage

When injury occurs, the Storyteller decides which tracker the conflict damages. In a physical conflict, this is normally Health; a social, psychic, or other "sense of self" conflict normally damages Willpower.

The winner of each contest applies their success margin to the loser's relevant tracker as damage. A character using ranged weapons likewise applies their margin from their attack test.

Sometimes, circumstances mandate extra damage after the contest:

- If the winner used a weapon, they add the relevant weapon's damage rating to the total damage (see p. 101).
- In a social conflict, add damage depending on the audience (see p. 122–123). The Storyteller may also add damage if the loser particularly values the audience's opinion.

EXAMPLE:

Firing her shotgun at a police officer, Clara achieves a margin of two successes. Adding the shotgun's weapon rating of +4, the officer suffers 6 points of damage.

Types of Damage

In the Storyteller System, damage comes in two types:

- **Superficial damage** causes bruising, sprains, and the like but not immediate life-threatening injury. Fists, kicks, and non-lethal weapons, such as tasers, do Superficial damage to humans (and therefore Hunters). Superficial damage in social conflict means embarrassment, a bruised ego, or shaken confidence and has no lasting effect on the target's image of others or themselves.
- **Aggravated damage** causes broken bones, wounds, and life-threatening injuries. Cutting and piercing weapons do Aggravated damage to humans, as does fire and firearms. Attacks that reveal secret knowledge about the target or attacks from close friends and trusted figures do Aggravated damage to Willpower.

If you're tired of being all banged up, there are certain ways to recover, of course. For more information, see "Healing" on p. 123.

THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

Supernatural creatures are a special case. Not all creatures suffer Aggravated damage the same way as humans do (such as vampires), and certain types of creatures suffer Aggravated damage from the legendary banes of their kind (such as fire and sunlight for vampires and silver for werewolves… in most cases… probably?). Some creatures are supernatural in potential, but human in body, like sorcerers and warlocks and perhaps the Good Folk. Other entities, like ghosts, may not suffer "damage" in traditional ways at all. This is part of the peril of being a Hunter, and the reason the wise Hunter researches their quarry before attempting to put it into an early grave. Or back in the grave, in some cases. Investigate and prepare, Hunters; know what you're getting into.

Tracking Damage

Characters apply their damage to the relevant track: Health or Willpower.

Unless otherwise stated, divide Superficial damage in half (rounded up) before applying it to the tracker.

Mark each level of Superficial damage on the character sheet by making a "/" on one box on the track.

Mark Aggravated damage on the character sheet by making an "X" on the tracker.

Certain systems have the same effect as damage, indicating the depletion of personal well-being. When a point is voluntarily spent from a tracker, such as when using Willpower to re-roll dice, mark it as Superficial

damage, a "/". If all points are already Superficially damaged, turn one into Aggravated damage instead, as per the Impairment rules (see below). Superficial damage sustained through spending this way is never halved.

Health	Willpower
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐

Impairment

Once the character sustains enough damage (of either type, or a mix) to fill their tracker, they are Impaired. Impaired characters lose two dice from all relevant dice pools: Physical pools from Impaired Health, Social, and Mental pools from Impaired Willpower, and any other pools the Storyteller believes to be similarly impaired. At the Storyteller's discretion, human characters under their control are incapacitated at this stage.

For every level of damage of either kind, Superficial or Aggravated, that a character takes while Impaired, convert one previously sustained Superficial damage to Aggravated damage on a one-for-one basis. Turn the "/" to a "X" on the track. (Remember to halve Superficial damage as usual before converting it.)

THE END OF THE TRACKER

A character with their tracker completely filled with Aggravated damage is out of the conflict, possibly permanently. In a physical combat, they are comatose or dead in most cases.

EXAMPLE:

The officer from the example above suffers 6 levels of Aggravated damage (shotgun vs. mortal), but he has only 5 health levels. He promptly expires.

Filling the Willpower tracker with Aggravated damage outside of a social conflict has no immediate effects other than Impairment. If it happens within a social conflict, the defeated character completely breaks down and loses face. They may be shunned by the cell, blackballed by fellow creed members, publicly embarrassed, or suffer any other consequence the Storyteller decides. (Note that one such consequence may very well be the death of the character.)

EXAMPLE:

After having drawn significant heat among the Hunter community by shotgunning a police officer, the cell is in hot water on various forums and other vital information-gathering channels. Those who lose all their Willpower in the ensuing social conflict are unable to defend or deflect their blame, and it might even be time to break up the cell. Then again, it's perhaps the first step in an arduous vindication plotline.

Healing

SUPERFICIAL HEALTH DAMAGE

At the beginning of a session, humans can remove a number of Superficial damage levels up to their Stamina rating from their Health tracker. At the Storyteller's discretion, they may remove Superficial damage at the beginning of a scene, if the Storyteller determines that enough time has passed since injury that they'd have had time to recover.

SUPERFICIAL WILLPOWER DAMAGE

At the beginning of a session, humans can remove a number of Superficial damage levels up to their Composure or Resolve rating (use highest) from their Willpower track. As well, accomplishing one's short-term Desire (see p. 55–56) restores a single point of damaged or spent Superficial Willpower.

EXAMPLE:

Natasha has Resolve 2 and Composure 4. She suffered 5 levels of Superficial damage to her Willpower tracker during a tense standoff with a ghost trying to take possession of her body. She can erase 4 levels of Superficial damage at the beginning of the next session.

Unlike Superficial Health damage, humans (particularly Hunters) don't necessarily start each session with all Superficial Willpower losses restored. Being a Hunter puts one under a great deal of stress.

AGGRAVATED HEALTH DAMAGE

Aggravated damage is serious business. The comparatively frail nature of the normal, mortal human body is quite plainly the reason so many Hunter careers are short and end suddenly.

For humans, a character with Medicine can convert Aggravated damage on the Health tracker to Superficial damage. They must succeed at a simple test of Intelligence + Medicine; the Difficulty equals the total Aggravated damage sustained by the patient. Attempts to heal oneself add +1 to the Difficulty.

The maximum points of Aggravated damage that a character can convert is half that character's Medicine rating, rounded up.

This healing happens over the course of the night. The Storyteller decides if any remaining injuries require only another day of similar treatment, or hospitalization.

Hospitalization avoids the need for more dice rolls, but injuries take the patient's total Aggravated damage in weeks to heal fully. The Storyteller can lessen this amount to fit the story better or allow the character to walk around injured – wearing a cast, for example.

AGGRAVATED WILLPOWER DAMAGE

At the end of each session, a character who has acted in accordance to their Ambition (see p. 55) can heal 1 level of Aggravated Willpower damage. Certain other circumstances available to Hunters may also restore Aggravated Willpower, such as certain benefits of Drive or Edges... or supernatural solutions that court the corruption of becoming a monster oneself.

However, the other consequences of losing a social or mental conflict — a bad reputation, tempting Overreach, susceptibility to mental control or social dominance — may continue as long as the Storyteller decides.

The Golden Rule

This is the most important rule of all, and the only real rule worth following: The story belongs to you and your troupe. This game should be whatever you want it to be, whether that's a nearly diceless chronicle of in-character intrigue against org power plays or a long-running tactical chronicle with each player controlling their own cell of Hunters.

If the rules in this book interfere with your enjoyment of the game, change them. The world is far too complex; no set of inflexible rules can possibly reflect it. Think of this book as a collection of guidelines: suggested but not mandatory ways of capturing the World of Darkness in the format of a game. You decide what works best in your game. And you may freely use, alter, abuse, or ignore these rules at your whim.

Rules of the Reckoning

The following systems specifically reflect the Hunter experience. And as much as they represent the way of the world for individual Hunters, so, too, do they demonstrate the cooperative nature of the Hunt. In particular, the Danger and Desperation systems affect the entire cell, while individual Drives represent the motivations that bring Hunters to pursue their vision of the Reckoning.

Cell Characteristics: Danger and Desperation

The state of a Hunter cell is expressed in two trackers: *Danger* and *Desperation*. These trackers are shared by the whole cell, and every member contributes to and is affected by them. If members of a cell part ways, each new cell (including cells of one) start off with Danger and Desperation values equal to the parent cell, but further changes apply only to the specific cell. The ravening werewolf or malicious sorcerer frankly don't care if you and your erstwhile companions have parted ways.

Desperation

(Tracker rating 1-5)

Desperation is a tracker that spans 1-5 boxes. It represents the state of urgency or even anxiety in the cell and dictates the amount of Desperation Dice (see below) that an individual Hunter can add to their pool when calling upon their Drive. The higher the Desperation, the stronger both the Hunter's Drives and the risk for Danger and Despair.

Desperation increases as a result of adversity and decreases when things favor the cell. This usually happens at the end of major scenes, where the fate of the Hunters, their quarry, or innocents are at stake.

While the individual story and Storyteller should ultimately dictate the exact conditions for Desperation increase or decrease, here are some common examples: Desperation increases when...

- *One or more of the Hunters suffers serious injury or death*
- *The quarry managed to escape or advance their agenda despite the efforts of the cell*
- *The cell failed to prevent harm to innocents as a result of the actions of their quarry*

Desperation decreases when...

- *The Hunters managed to gain vital information about their quarry without increasing Danger*
- *The Hunters prevented the harming of innocents while accomplishing another objective*
- *The Hunters managed to seriously harm or damage their quarry, directly or by proxy*

Again, these are only examples. Storytellers are encouraged to increase or decrease Desperation as consequences for actions the Hunters take or gambits that prove successful. However, it should be perfectly clear when a change to Desperation may arise — if the players don't know that something they try might have consequences, they lack the information necessary to make an informed decision.

You can track Desperation by placing a number of distinct dice in the center of the table, where everyone has access to them. This way, each player always knows the cell's Desperation, and can use the Desperation Dice accordingly (see below).

Danger

(Tracker rating varies, default is 1-5)

As the Hunters pursue their quarry, they are ever at risk of becoming its prey in turn. Danger represents the extent to which their enemies are aware of the cell's actions, and the risk of the cell becoming a target. As Danger rises, the Hunters face greater challenges, as their enemies tighten security, draft additional servants, and eventually take direct action against the Hunters. The exact effect of Danger varies depending on the chronicle, story and even scene, as does the length of the track. Danger is not carried over from story to story, but some chronicles might employ an overarching Chronicle Danger tracker, separate from the regular one. This is completely up to the story and Storyteller, as the effects of Danger are always tailored to the story and chronicle.

Danger increases as a result of Hunter actions, either mechanically as a consequence of *Overreaching* (see Desperation Dice below) or story events, as the Storyteller sees fit. Danger rarely decreases during a story, but laying low for extended periods, at the risk of losing vital opportunities, can sometimes lower Danger. This is one of the tragedies of the Hunt: Lying low may keep the quarry in the dark about the cell's pursuit, but at what cost to innocent lives?

USING DANGER

The outcomes of Danger vary, but ultimately represent, well, how much danger is present in a given situation. Think of these as if/ then statements for story events, or benchmarks as to the degree of opposition the quarry brings to bear against the cell.

While the individual story and Storyteller should ultimately dictate the exact consequences of Danger, here are some examples:

- ➜ *The Difficulty to trace the quarry's financial records is equal to 2 + Danger.*
- ➜ *The quarry will always be accompanied by a number of bodyguards equal to Danger.*
- ➜ *At Danger 4, the quarry will begin surveillance of the Hunters and those who are close to them.*
- ➜ *At Danger 5, one Contact, Ally, or other person important to a Hunter will be targeted for abduction.*

In contrast to Desperation (which increases as a result of player choices), it is up to the Storyteller to decide whether to disclose the effects of Danger to the players or to obscure it, keeping them guessing about the consequences of their reckless actions.

In either case, however, narrative framing should reinforce the increase of Danger. The Storyteller should describe the escalation of Danger with a sense of burgeoning anxiety for the Hunters; everything from, "The hair stands up on the back of your neck as the curtains close in the bay window of the house across the street," to, "You hear a heavy slam as the freight-elevator doors shut and the elevator descends into depths unknown, with all of the vampire's victims inside it," to, "You hear a scream and then silence, and then an unmistakable voice greets you on your now-dead contact's mobile phone." Anything that lets the players know the quarry is becoming increasingly aware of their Hunters helps drive home the function of the system.

It's important to remind the players of the Danger they're facing, We strongly recommend placing the tracker or tokens in the center of the game table to visually represent the state of the Hunters' Danger. Feel free to be dramatic or even theatrical with this: Consider, for example, using props such as lighting a candle for each Danger level as the value increases, or adding a skull token to the center of the table when Danger increases, to remind the players of their Hunters' fragile mortality.

Hunter Characteristics: Creeds, Drives and Edges

The fundamental traits of anyone but the most short-lived of Hunters are their *creed*, their *Drive* and their *Edges*. Each of these characteristics relates to one another.

A Hunter's creed is the way in which they approach the Hunt. It represents their favored methods and past experiences. The Drive is a Hunter's core motivation: The burning cause to which all else is secondary, *why* they take up the creed, and for which they are able to push themselves beyond mundane limits in times of desperation. The Edges are the unique means in which the Hunter is able to stand their own, however tenuously, against the unnatural forces arrayed against them. A Hunter without a Drive will not muster the strength to persevere in the face of adversity. A hunter lacking Edges will eventually fail, no matter how valiant their efforts.

(We use the difference between capital-H Hunters and lowercase-h hunters to distinguish. A capital-H Hunter has a Drive and probably exercises Edges. A lowercase-h hunter has no Drive, and might hunt monsters because they know they're out there. But without Drive and Edges, they'll be at a distinct disadvantage. Many hunters belong to orgs, offsetting their individual lack of advantage with the resources, training, and even numbers of the org. No few Hunters begin their careers among the orgs but ultimately have a falling-out with them because of their motivations — see p. 219 for more on this.)

Drives

In **Hunter**, each character has a single Drive that provides both a reason for their pursuit as a Hunter as well as fuels their actions, pushing them above and beyond the mundane. A Hunter's Drive enables them to perform extraordinary feats in their hunt, but it also carries the risk of Overreaching, tipping the hand of the Hunter and increasing overall Danger. One's Drive can also be temporarily lost to Despair, requiring the Hunter to re-establish their sense of purpose in order to use it again.

Desperation Dice

A Hunter with a Drive can elect to use *Desperation Dice* whenever they attempt a test that falls within their creed Field. The player adds a number of Desperation Dice equal to the cell's current Desperation to their Skill pool, counting successes and criticals as if they were regular dice. In addition, rolling a "1" on at least one Desperation Die triggers *Overreach* or *Despair*. If the test was a win, the player can choose to either Overreach, keeping the win, or treat the test as a failure and enter Despair. One or more "1" on a failed test always causes Despair; the player has no choice in the matter.

EXAMPLE:

Mathias is a Hunter driven by Curiosity and part of the Underground Creed. He attempts to gain backstage access to a concert held by the cell's quarry, disguising himself as a roadie. Security is tight, so Mathias' player has to succeed at a Subterfuge + Composure test at Difficulty 4 to avoid detection. Since the Underground Creed's Field involves "Stealth and Subterfuge in service to the Hunt" he is able to add Desperation Dice equal to the cell's

Desperation level (currently three) to the test. His pool is seven dice, and adding the Desperation dice he now gets to roll a very respectable ten dice.

Players may not use Willpower to reroll Desperation Dice.

OVERREACH

For each "1" on the Desperation Dice, increase Danger by 1. The Hunter has in some way revealed themselves and their cell to the quarry, in a manner consistent with their Drive. The test is still considered a win, but the long-term consequences are potentially disastrous for the cell as a whole.

DESPAIR

The test fails no matter the amount of successes rolled and the Hunter enters a state of Despair, in which they are unable to call upon their Drive to use Desperation Dice until they've redeemed themselves in their own eyes. Each Drive has a different condition for redemption, and the condition doesn't have to be met by any specific individual in the cell — it can be treated as a group effort.

EXAMPLE:

Mathias carefully mingles with the roadies setting up the show, but as they start rigging the lights his inexperience makes itself known. He tests Subterfuge + Composure at Difficulty 4 (see previous example) to keep his cool. The regular dice come up with three successes, and the Desperation Dice produce another, netting him four successes in total. A win! But one of the Desperation Dice showed a "1," which complicates things. Mathias' player can now choose to keep the win but add 1 to the Cell's Danger, as his curiosity has roused the suspicion of some of the roadies, or chose to fail the test, forcing him to flee the scene but sparing the group from the increased Danger. In the latter case, he is also beset by Despair, and will require the help of the group to acquire new information about their quarry (as per the Redemption condition for his Curiosity Creed) before he can use Desperation Dice again.

CREED FIELDS

Players can add Desperation Dice to their characters' dice pools based on circumstances that relate to their creed. The circumstances in which Desperation Dice apply are as follows:

Entrepreneurial: Building, inventing, augmenting, or repairing while on the Hunt.

Faithful: Any direct conflict (physical, social, or mental) with the supernatural while on the Hunt.

Inquisitives: Gaining information while on the Hunt, such as research, breaking and entering, and interrogation.

Martial: Physical conflict while on the Hunt (which need not be with the quarry itself, or even the supernatural).

Underground: Stealth and subterfuge in service of the Hunt.

List of Drives

Each Hunter has one specific drive that motivates them to act against the supernatural. A player chooses the character's Drive during character creation (see p. 57), and each has a powerful influence on the Hunter's outlook. Drives might complement a character's creed, but might also suggest opposition to it: Hunters are complex individuals and don't often get to choose the circumstances of their grim epiphanies (though players do...).

Drives suggest characterization for the Hunter, but also dictate certain consequences on some outcomes involving Desperation Dice (see above).

This list of Drives isn't intended to be exhaustive. Future Hunter supplements may contain additional Drives, or players may work with their Storytellers to invent new ones. New Drives should be distinct from the existing ones, not just a narrow circumstance. (For example, a Drive conceived as "Nosy" is probably best treated as Curiosity.) Ultimately, Drives are designed to get the Hunters into trouble as much as they are to provide a source of extraordinary potential via Desperation Dice.

Curiosity

What do monsters do in the shadows? The Hunter is driven to learn everything about their quarry, insatiably digging ever deeper for each new fact uncovered.

Redemption: The cell must uncover new information about their quarry.

Vengeance

The Hunter or someone close to them has been hurt by the quarry, or others of their kind. The scales must be balanced.

Redemption: The cell must hurt their quarry (or a similar creature) either directly or by proxy.

Oath

The Hunter has made a pledge against the creatures of the night and will stop at nothing until it's fulfilled — their word is their bond.

Redemption: The cell must help the Hunter to actively uphold their oath or bring it closer to fulfillment.

Greed

A greedy character wants what a supernatural foe has, thinking it unjust that night-stalking creatures profit by their monstrosity.

Redemption: Acquisition of resources from their quarry, or from creatures like it.

Pride

The encounter with the supernatural and superhuman has ignited a fierce desire in the Hunter to prove themselves against creatures handed powers they never deserved. Whether as a representative of the indomitable human spirit or just maddeningly competitive, the Hunter will take every chance to overcome their quarry.

Redemption: Besting the quarry in some type of challenge, directly or indirectly.

Envy

Why do monsters get to have such amazing advantages? The Hunter will join the night, or die trying.

Redemption: Get into the quarry's good graces or procure samples of the source of their power.

Atonement

Knowingly or unknowingly, the Hunter has aided a monster in the past and now seeks atonement for their actions. They know that innocents have been hurt due to their actions, and willingly put themselves in harm's way to settle the debt.

Redemption: The cell must protect someone from the quarry (or a similar creature), either directly or by proxy, by standing in harm's way, taking a proverbial bullet for them. Alternatively, the Hunter can redeem themselves by doing the same for a cellie. ■

Chapter Five:

STORYTELLING

Chaos is merely order waiting to be deciphered.
— José Saramago, *The Double*

Much in the way an individual human life does, a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. That parallel is one key reason stories resonate with people, sustain them, and stand as a central metaphor for life itself. “So, what’s your story?” If others ask you that question, you know they’re not asking about the latest piece of fiction you’ve completed, right?

This chapter takes a look at storytelling from two distinct vantage points: How to design and tell stories, and how to manage the role of the Storyteller for a troupe.

Chronicle Tenets

Chronicle Tenets form the foundation of the stories your troupe will tell. They are statements expressing the values the chronicle seeks to convey. Think of them as themes, morals, moods — overall declarations of what the troupe's collective stories have to say. They can be general or specific or some combination of both.

Before the chronicle starts, the troupe should assemble a set of chronicle Tenets, which will help creatively constrain the direction the story will take (the good kind of constraint). These Tenets can state a preference for genre emulation or dramatic irony, elevate a moral direction, or can plant a flag for personal taste or real-life player concerns. Deciding upon Tenets can actually be one of the most fun parts of chronicle planning, when everyone can weigh in and brainstorm and make clear what they want to experience in the stories the troupe plans to tell together.

Chronicle Tenets apply to all players' characters in a chronicle, even if the character doesn't hold a specific Tenet as a personal belief. The struggle between a character's individual moral code and that of their society forms one of the core stories in human literature, after all. Chronicle Tenets comprise a kind of ethical ground floor, so that if the characters descend into zealous slaughter, it carries a cost.

Before actual play begins, make sure to talk through the chosen Tenets with the troupe, so that all players understand what they mean and what kind of actions would be considered violations.

CHARACTER AND PLAYER BOUNDARIES

In terms of game systems, Tenets will define the expectations players and Storytellers bring to the table in terms of tone and experience. Tenets exist so that members of the troupe can recite or point to them and remind one another of the troupe's social compact when they feel like the chronicle may be deviating from what everyone bought into.

As always, respect one another. If a player might genuinely fear being put at risk by playing a story featuring a given violation, the Storyteller should either avoid that subject or invite the player to join a different troupe to explore a different chronicle entirely.

Some sample chronicle Tenet sets follow:

HUMANIST

- Never kill the innocent
- Stand against injustice, whether supernatural or mundane
- Honor an earnest desire for redemption

NEO-NOIR

- Vices thrive in the fractures left by the stresses of the Hunt
- The Hunter's calling is thankless
- No good deed goes unpunished

VENGEFUL VIGILANCE

- In some cases, violence is the only answer
- The guilty must be held accountable — and suffer
- The shadow of the future looms over all decisions made in the present

STREET CODE

- Never snitch
- Respect others, and demand respect
- Don't kill outsiders

For example, Martyna and friends are setting up a chronicle, and have agreed to aim for what they call "Rural Gothic." They intend the chronicle to be gritty, with personal stakes, and a sense of geographic isolation that lets natural beauty and the sublime come to the fore, but that also puts degeneration and morality in focus. They have agreed on the chronicle Tenets "Punish the guilty," "Everyone deserves a second chance," and "Violence is powerful but final." They are particularly interested in the seeming incongruity of punishing the guilty and offering the second chances — as Storyteller, Martyna intends that this will set up some great conflicts within the cell. In their rural setting, violence has its own consequences: The players want to make an effort to protect innocence, acknowledge that humans will go to great lengths to pretend the supernatural doesn't exist, and not become known as "those bloodthirsty maniacs over the next hill."

What's In a Story?

If you've read lots of fiction, seen plenty of movies, or played many interactive games, you might have a general idea of stories' inner workings. Because Hunter is made of (and by) players telling one another stories not about themselves but, instead, about investigators into the supernatural, having a better sense of how stories work and what makes them more pleasurable improves everyone's experience. This chapter aims to show Storytellers the cogs that interlock to create an engaging narrative.

Beginnings

A wise writer — whose identity breeds some disagreement — once observed that only two stories exist. In one, someone travels to a new place. In the other, a stranger comes to town. Yes, that counts as both wisdom and as a joke. More on jokes later.

For Hunters, the serious aspect of the observation can take many forms, with many destinations, in more "worlds" than one as otherworldly things intrude upon our own. Discovering those mysteries offers dynamic and varied settings for your stories, so the next-to-hardest part of story creation already exists in these pages. The hardest part is deciding who goes on the journey, which means players creating the Hunters in the cell at the heart of your game and the Storyteller choosing the cast of supporting characters whom the cell meets, loses, loves, hates, finds, fights, saves, or (sometimes and) kills.

Achieving diversity of personalities in the cell during character creation therefore looms as the most important step before the start of play. Imagine a game in which a bunch of guns-blazing killing machines spend every evening doing what they've armed themselves to do. Certain players might get off on such ac-

tivities... but who wants to run it, session after session? Thus, another bit of wisdom to end this advice on how to start: Variety is the spice of life (and of the story).

Middles

Once your newly minted cellmates make it through their initiation into this era of the Reckoning, remember: No one is born a Hunter. Already, at the moment of individually learning the truth about themselves, the players' characters were in the midst of other lives — lives that don't simply cease to exist because another, stranger life revealed itself. Hunter existence, itself a product of the presence of the supernatural, now must unfold in secret.

Know what fuels great stories? Secrets. Keeping them. Uncovering them. Covering up ones too dangerous to be unleashed (regardless of whether the secret-keepers are the Hunters themselves or their opponents; works either way). And any secret worth keeping has a cost, whether in honor, or honesty, or some other values that take a backseat en route to the unknown's staying unknown. The World of Darkness itself is a world of secrets and the consequences of their existence or exposure.

The element that characterizes all stories, however, is conflict. You can see how probing a mystery that surrounds some terrifying quarry connects to advice about secrets and conflict, but some things are clear-cut, and no one bothers much to keep those things under wraps.

Hunters come with their own war, a Reckoning they may well be losing or, in the view of some Hunters, already lost. That very difference of opinion can seed great stories that involve no one apart from the cell members themselves. After all, cellies must have one another's backs; by no means do they have to agree about anything else, especially with a number of creeds shaping their world view.

Ends

A wise, though fictitious, person once said that nothing ever ends. Granted, a novel, a series, or a movie does, but, hello: sequels, seasons, reboots, spinoffs, adaptations. Games that tell stories differ, though. A chronicle — a storytelling game that stretches over many sessions, sometimes for years — can resemble several of these examples, and over time, perhaps even all of them. What each of these entertainment modes can lend a longstanding chronicle bears examining.

In a decent sequel, what seemed to be factual in an earlier story reveals itself to be something else altogether in a later tale: That dead foe isn't. Authorities behind the unspeakably cruel prison send bounty hunters after the escapees. The leader of the "mortal uprising," aided by their fellow Hunters, dies. The offspring of some big bad from years ago come sniffing around in search of revenge. Treating chains of linked stories like a season of a television series or streaming show can illustrate how a cell's actions create unexpected results: Months after a blood-drinking night-haunt's defeat, the rival who had been lurking in the shadows revitalizes the shattered blood cult. One of the would-be victims the cell rescued talks to the press — and shares pictures of their saviors, letting every supernatural creature paying attention know what the Hunters look like. A "skin-changer" who fought alongside the cell against a renegade warlock resurfaces as a bellicose threat themselves. Asking yourself, as Storyteller, "What would happen if this one thing changed after that last story ended?" can produce an almost endless stream of material.

And here's a secret about stories of all kinds, even ones generated in the course of gameplay: Stakes make for memorable ones. The Hunters wage a war against an infinitude of encroaching shadows. Defeat in that battle entails sacrifice and possibly, even likely, loss of life. At the moment such an option might be presented to players — at the outset, before play begins — is the time to point out that the deaths of longtime characters, especially ones who can become entwined with players' own perspectives, are likely to have genuine emotional consequences. As some players might not want such an outcome, all participants should agree to the possibility up front. After all, what's more Hunter than a meaningful death? No victory without sacrifice, after all.

The best things about such a pact are the sense of danger imparted ("This character I love could die") and the possibility that reaching an ending which usually arrives only in real life might ignite the desire for a fresh set of characters in a chronicle all their own. Also, if you're wondering why this troupe pact needs agreement before play begins, consider how you'd react as a player if the person leading your longtime game asked for your feelings about a story that includes your character's death. If nothing else, such questions would probably cost that episode every ounce of surprise it might have sparked. Play respectfully.

Your Troupe and Toolbox

Coming at it from the opposite angle, any group gathering to play a roleplaying game has the same goal: to tell an interesting, engaging, and collaborative story. Those stories can vary wildly from self-styled heroes saving the day against bloodthirsty monsters to grim tales of a cell fracturing under the intense stress of being Hunters. These and many other types of stories are perfect for Hunter, as long as they seek that primary goal.

The players' characters are the stars of this story. They're the agents of change, the people primarily in the spotlight and the engines that push that story forward. The Storyteller, you, has to create something to push *against*, including Storyteller characters, external plots, and even portions of a Hunter's own backstory. These basic concepts of conflict, interaction, and resolution are the core of storytelling.

The players' characters are the stars of this story. They're the agents of change, the people primarily in the spotlight and the engines that push that story forward.

Your Chronicle

While the players have the goal of building interesting, rich, and memorable characters, your task is bigger. You're going to build the stage on which they confront horrific monsters and pursue personal goals, invoke a (possibly messy) backstory, and create a memorable experience with your players.

Start with a concept. What's the Hunter story you're envisioning about? Even before the chronicle begins, you'll want to establish some creative constraints. This is a time to consider and discuss the Chronicle Tenets with the players. (See p. 132 and below for more about Chronicle Tenets.)

At this phase of your chronicle, you want to have just enough of an idea in your mind to pitch it to your prospective players. They need enough information to know if your chronicle sounds exciting and interesting to them. Once you've assembled your troupe, then you can move earnestly into chronicle design as a collaborative process.

Try to stay with a few short statements at this phase. It can be exciting to leap into designing a colorful, exciting, and complete world of intrigue and dangers, but doing so can leave a chronicle with little space for the players' characters to act meaningfully. Or it can lead to a chronicle that doesn't fit the story the troupe wants to tell.

Tools and Toys

There are as many ways to track the information in your chronicle as there are chronicles themselves. Belows are some suggestions:

DEADTREE EDITION

Notecards might be the most useful thing a Storyteller can have on hand. From quickly jotting down a message to pass to a player or writing in the name and some details of that Storyteller character you just made up on the spot, notecards belong next to the Storyteller almost as much as the rulebook.

Notecards are also a very convenient way to prepare and organize your chronicle. For Session Zero, use a note card for every Storyteller character or players' character created. Decide a basic format and stick to it for all characters: Character Name and pronouns, player name and pronouns (if appropriate), and the essential details you want to see every time you think of that character. Suggestions would include things like Character Concept, key goals and desires, and beliefs or other character elements. For players' characters, consider using the back of the card for a series of 3-5 questions to help spark the troupe to build relationships among their Hunters and lay out hooks for future use. And during conflicts, having these notecards handy means you can organize them into a stack to easily track the action.

Additionally, notecards are great for jotting down your scenes. Give each a brief title to spark your memory, then use an established format to note the Objective, Challenge, and Reward present in the scene. (See p. 137 for more on Objectives, Challenges, and Rewards.) Also put down brief reminders for specific elements that should be present (physical items, people, experiences), and some bullet points on the critical messaging you want to express in the scene. Even jot the outcome down on the notecard, especially if something notable happens that you'll want to reference or adjust for later. Conveniently, you can move notecards around in case scene sequences change from your initial plans. Usually, Finding the Pilot's Gruesome Remains comes before Confrontation with the Blood Junkie, but players are cagey individuals and might stumble into the conflict before discovering the justification.

If you follow this approach, you'll end up with a lot of notecards. Pick up a box of appropriately sized binder clips as well. These help organize your existing information and keep the blank notecards from scattering.

A SERIES OF TUBES

There are more free or low-cost digital tools available now for Storytellers to organize their chronicles than one can ever hope to fully cover. Here are some examples of how technology can help you plan your chronicle.

Lightweight project management software, like Trello, offers excellent tools for both the planning and playing phases of your chronicle. During planning, the ability to visually track where you are with any number of elements (antagonist development, plot design, etc). Flowchart software, such as Gliffy Diagrams or Lucidchart, allows you to map out key decisions or success/failure points and where those will take the chronicle, as well as rearrange the diagram itself during the chronicle to adjust for unexpected decisions or changes in the story.

There are numerous software solutions available today for chronicle management. Some, like OneNote or Evernote, aren't especially designed for this purpose, but have all the necessary tools in place to do an excellent job.

If you'd prefer something online and potentially available to the entire troupe, a number of web-based "campaign managers" are available to help bring order to a chronicle planning effort. Many of these have an extensive ability to interlink articles, quickly producing a Wiki-like experience useful to both the players and the Storyteller. Be careful with online chronicle management tools. They can turn into timesinks of information a Storyteller might not ultimately use, or be so extensive that they're intimidating to a new player to your chronicle.

Structuring Stories

Now, you're ready to run your first **Hunter** game — except that you may have never run a storytelling game in your life!

Remain calm. Your players probably share your inexperience. Some fumbling ought to be expected and readily forgiven, on all sides.

A sequence of what should happen during your first, second, or thousandth session may prove helpful. An example follows. Just keep in mind these rules of thumb/ claw: Games should be entertainment. Horror games should be *scary* entertainment. If stuff creeps in that meets neither of those criteria, remember and rely upon "Yes, and..."

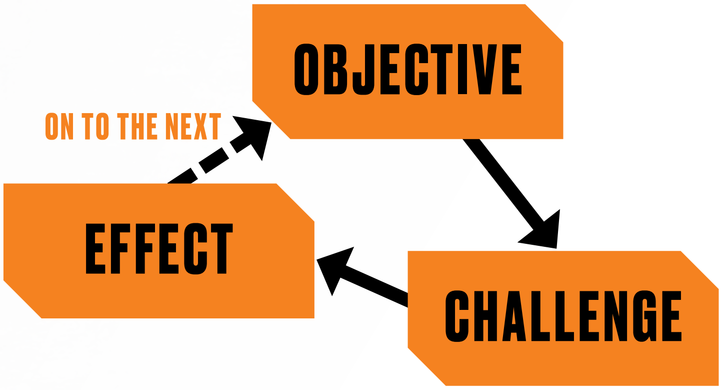
As a very simple model, the first three steps for a chronicle usually are:

- Decide upon chronicle Tenets (see p. 132)
- Character creation and session zero (build relationship maps, choose Touchstones)
- Chronicle kickoff (establish stakes, understand the call to action)

Meanwhile, for a *story*, a flowchart is optimally a jump-start, so proposing a familiar and repeatable game loop is helpful, which the Storyteller can reuse without end.

The game-loop or flowchart steps of a game story are:

- Objective: Everyone figures out what's going on and what needs to be done)
- Challenge: The central conflicts — there may be multiple challenges, or this flowchart step can be a repeated subroutine if there are multiple steps to resolving the challenge
    - For example, getting into the warehouse, neutralizing the guards, locating the documents, a climactic conflict with a rampaging poltergeist, and the escape
- Reward: This may be a physical object such as the dead millionaire's stack of bearer bonds, or it may be the newfound respect of a better-funded org, but in general it also includes narrative progression and the story denouement. Everybody gets to celebrate the destruction of that goddamn werewolf, but what are those eyes peering in from the darkness enveloping the glade? *And, scene.*



For stopping points, the flowchart looks more like forks in a road; sometimes you bear left, sometimes right, sometimes full speed ahead:

- Leave them laughing: After the Hunters celebrate the sorcerer's fall, layer on a material reward or related good news

- Leave them lacrimal: Also known as, “Kill the right one,” as in everybody’s favorite supporting character, such as by wounds sustained or a vengeful foe’s parting shot
- Leave them lacerated: A costly aftermath, whether as pyrrhic victory (the attackers die or flee, but the art museum burns anyway), empty victory (the Hunters betray their values to win), or no victory at all (despite betraying their values to win, the Hunters must flee a superior foe/ mutually lethal combat/ hopeless cause)
- For seeding a sequel, the flowchart calls for attention to how the players respond to supporting characters/new opponents/novel settings.

Some shake-it-up options for a subsequent story are:

- Determine whether the players’ feelings about a particular element of the current story are especially strong, one way or another
- Set up an expectation for a return, whether by a strong supporting character (“If we ever see you Walmart John Wicks again...”) or to some resonant setting (the surviving victims bid a tearfully thankful farewell to the cell)
- Optionally, add a curveball (the story’s main antagonist or an invaluable ally is last seen aflame, explosive, or dismembered; months later, news reaches the Hunters that the rescued neighborhood has had an uptick in violent... and strange... crime)
- Surprise! (that mysterious stranger glimpsed only from afar turns out to be the cell’s boon companion or blood-sworn enemy; the young werewolf who experienced their first change turns up as a grownup refugee hiding in a warzone, as a prisoner on a detention camp work detail, or a raider who attacks the cell but relents once everyone gets a whiff of who they are

Core Concepts

Before talking about specific elements of storytelling and being a Storyteller, we should take a moment to establish some core concepts that will be the foundation for much of what follows.

Style of Play

Before the first mark on a character sheet, even before the story takes solid form, everyone should agree on what type of story they want to tell. A **Hunter** story can take many different forms depending on when, where, and how the Storyteller presents the chronicle. For the best results, involve the entire troupe in this discussion from the very beginning. Ask for movies, shows, comics, anything that inspires them to want to play **Hunter**. Discuss what style of play the troupe wants to experience and then build toward that goal. This is a much more rewarding and less stressful approach than trying to edit your fully designed chronicle to fit this new perspective.

Use this conversation to bring up and build out the Chronicle Tenets (see p. 132). Chronicle Tenets make sure everyone’s on the same page, and while unexpected narrative events may (and should!) transpire, they’re also a sort of compact that states troupe preferences. If everyone has agreed to a high-stakes suspense chronicle and one player makes decisions as if it were a shotgun-madness story, the Chronicle Tenets bring those expectations into alignment. (That doesn’t mean they can’t change as play progresses, with collective agreement.) While the entire troupe is actively engaged in discussing their favorite themes and styles of play, regularly revisit the Chronicle Tenets to make sure they accurately reflect the experience everyone expects from the chronicle.

Even if this troupe has played together in the past, perhaps many times, it’s still invaluable to revisit them with each game session or new chronicle. Some members of the troupe might want a different experience

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than in the past or want to use those past experiences to fine tune what they did and didn't enjoy. This collaborative framework design will help keep the players invested and excited in the chronicle and help reduce Storyteller burnout.

This may also be the point where some players find this isn't the chronicle they want to experience or you, the Storyteller, have to sacrifice some elements. Sometimes players discover in this phase that their style of play just isn't a good fit for the rest of the troupe.These are hard realizations, but much better to happen at this stage than after everyone invests their time in something they ultimately don't enjoy.

Things you want to talk about will include Mood, Tone, Story Elements, and Interactions.

Mood

Mood refers to the attitude players and Storytellers take toward the story itself. This single element can heavily impact player excitement and ongoing enjoyment. A troupe may want an irreverent romp through the lives of the protagonists, complete with gallows humor and with a lot of out-of-character back-and-forth. That same troupe later might want a very intense, in-character experience where they really dive into the horror elements and bring them to life. Both types of stories are valid. Both types are welcomed, enjoyable, and engaging. And so are all the points in between. But it's crucial to agree on the story's mood before someone's serious, heartfelt in-character scene collapses from a flippant joke, undermining the experience for many at the table.

When a troupe approaches the mood of their story, it's helpful to reflect on what's at the heart of **Hunter: The Reckoning** and how your troupe wants to interact with them at the table. For example, a core element of the game is Sacrifice. Some troupes will want to roleplay the drama, stress, and loss of Sacrifice. The mood of the session will feel serious and tense. That troupe will want the emotional investment of the moment and to really feel the Sacrifice. As their Storyteller, use their investment to engage with them meaningfully. Lean into the dramatic roleplaying of the scene. Talk in-character, full of emotion. When providing details, say things like, “The rough stone tunnel chills you, and the only sound is the dripping blood from the gash across your cell member’s back. Their breath is audible, more labored. You’re not sure how long they can keep going.” Describe with feeling and emotion, and not so much with physical attributes of the space.

Other troupes will still lean into the concept of Sacrifice, but might not enjoy that emotional kick. Instead, they might approach the moment with fatalistic humor and inside jokes. Go with what engages the players. Engagement demonstrates that the players are interested in what’s happening.

Tone

If mood is how the troupe approaches the story, tone is how the Storyteller presents the story to the troupe. Tone will shape how players color each scene with the appropriate emotions, perceptions, and descriptors. This sounds much like mood, and will often line up on that same scale of humor to horror, but not always.Take a moment to look through this book, and see how the art, writing, and even layout communicate the tone of **Hunter**.

When you think of tone, reflect back on your favorite media (interactive and traditional) that share specific themes with **Hunter**. Some will be analytical, precise, and driven: stories with cold and calculating antagonists enacting carefully orchestrated schemes. In this type of chronicle, the tone would focus on facts, discoveries, and maneuvering. “How” is an important keyword in such a chronicle. (Players feel insightful and competent when their characters can leverage knowledge against the antagonists.) Other Chronicles are emotionally charged, where the feelings and expressions of the characters are a critical part of the story. This sort of chronicle will often place character motivations at the forefront of the storytelling and force snap decisions in moments of emotional intensity. “Why” is the important keyword in this style, as the players want to understand and feel, but perhaps aren’t so concerned with in-depth research.

Tone, like mood, can vary throughout the chronicle. Starting off with one style to break the ice for players new to **Hunter: The Reckoning** and then transiting to other styles as their interests change is natural and common in Storytelling.

Elements

This is where you get down to the specific ingredients of the story. Consider this a wish list from the entire troupe on antagonist types, personalities, factions, locations, and set pieces, and all the other components that make up the story or chronicle. It doesn’t mean all of these elements will make it into the narrative, but agreement on what creates excitement and enthusiasm for everyone involved is a great shortcut to quick buy-in when those elements appear in the story.

Don’t feel like this is a point in the process where the Storyteller needs to reveal all (or any) of the elements they’re already considering for their chronicle. Instead, this step will help you populate that chronicle with things you know the players already want to experience.

This discussion of elements also helps to establish the broader setting of your chronicle, both as a physical location and as a genre. If the troupe gravitates toward something that feels more like a gritty procedural drama, they may be signalling that they would enjoy a game in a cold, gloomy urban environment. If the troupe describes something closer to roadtrip monster-hunting, you might want to introduce stories involving motels, small towns, and similar elements. Plenty of traditional modern media can inspire such a spectrum of takes, from *The Wire* to *Lovecraft Country.*

The elements discussion is also a great opportunity to talk about what story elements the troupe wants to avoid entirely, keep intentionally vague, and things to keep off screen entirely. Yes, this is a horror game of cruel monsters and desperate people, but first and foremost, everyone is playing to tell an engaging story. Always strive to respect each persons’ boundaries in the troupe, both in your chronicle planning and during play.

There are numerous table safety tools available to aid you in such respectful measures. Discuss which ones are appropriate for this specific troupe. Use them every story — never assume you, the Storyteller, know each player well enough to make this decision for them.

More information about this topic is available in the Appendix: Advice for Considerate Play on p. 274.

Interactions

Now that you as Storyteller have an idea about what pieces everyone wants in the chronicle, it's time to again make sure everyone agrees on how they interact. The most classic example of this is the "Is player versus player conflict allowed?" but expand on that. Some troupes may enjoy unreliable or even duplicitous fellow Hunters, reflecting the high stakes, stress, and individual motives of retaking the world from monsters. Establish this at the very beginning to help avoid negative experiences in the game from bleeding over into player dissatisfaction. (Note that there's never an excuse for a *player* to be an asshole to another *player*. Keep the dramatics focused on the game and story.)

Strive to remind your troupe that a **Hunter** chronicle should feel risky during this discussion. This is a game where "trust no one" is a cornerstone of the game-world. The concept of second-guessing and paranoia really helps drive home the feeling that your chronicle is about a cell of Hunters fighting not just monsters, but also organized rivals and sometimes even each other.

Behind the Storytelling Scenes

While a well-crafted tale can seem to simply flow from a gifted Storyteller and their troupe, in truth, the process of planning and, indeed, discovering an emergent story reveals that many components contribute to the whole.

Who?

To iterate the importance of characters to the game, whether portrayed by the players or the Storyteller, consider this observation (attributed to F. Scott Fitzgerald): "Character is plot, plot is character." What this adage means for Hunters, their allies, and their opponents is that each, as a character, has a goal.

A goal can be anything thus far unachieved, from desperate to grandiose, immediate or lifelong. For the Hunters, who are the game's protagonists, being the underdog is the ever-present reality: The world is threatened by monsters everyone knows about but very few acknowledge exist, and those monsters have horrifying advantages over those humans who would rebuke their wicked aims.

Desperation can manifest in several ways, including manic activity ("If you never slow down, the world's dead carcass recedes to a blur"), depressive lassitude ("War's over, and Dracula won, so why try…"), or punitive outlashings ("Had the IAO not been such fucking assholes, the city wouldn't be on this precipice"). Note that all these behaviors can stem from a single individual, over time.

Grandiosity can take the forms of rank braggadocio ("This cell can tame a werewolf all by itself"), unfeasible scheming ("I see a way to bring the worldwide conspiracy of vampires to its knees"), or dismissive condescension ("Are you going on about the invisible man again?").

Just as some of these utterances could spring from a single character but probably not at the same time, goals are — likewise — contextual. Amid an ambush by a bloodsucker's flunkies or would-be authorities, some of these character perspectives fade into the background, which is not equivalent to fading away altogether. Does desperation turn a cautious warrior into a self-sacrificing one? Do unworkable ideas lead a usually caring Inquisitive to pursue routed foes and ignore wounded cellmates? Among the best tools for integrating such imperfections into a game's characters are individual Drives, so use them to help frame interesting conflicts and provoke meaningful choices.

What?

Well, Hunters, of course, in conflict with an unholy army of supernatural beings, coerced or corrupt people, police or other mundane authorities, rival monster hunters, and perhaps even the community they're trying to save itself. The operative word in the preceding sentence, though, is *conflict*, which is the soul of any story, the point of intersection for two or more goals, the collision between a reality the characters seek to create and the realities that stand in their way.

Conflict comes in several varieties. Internal conflict typically entails the self and its competing desires, whereas external conflict pits the self against all other comers. Because a structural divide exists between the orgs and Hunters, the former of whom regard the Hunt as an exercise in societal control that can never be questioned, and independent Hunters, who generally react to the orgs with resentment about who gets to make rules, disagreements among cellmates might also be considered internal — that is, a mindset that used to be seen uniformly as reflecting cell unity is now viewed as a newly divided house. Meanwhile, everything from an encounter with a rude cashier to a life-or-death battle with a vampire made of literal shadow counts as external conflict.

Direct conflict, despite its name, can be tricky to distinguish from indirect conflict, but here goes: If that cashier is stonewalling the Hunters and demanding that they "make a purchase" before he'll call his manager, whom the Hunters hope to slyly interrogate, that'd be direct. If the same thing happens as the cell is (misguidedly) just trying to get some food, that'd be indirect. Probably. Up until a point. You know what we're talking about.

Certain types of indirect conflict include "barter battles," wherein the cell or its members take on the cause of some beset stranger in exchange for directions to that rumored werewolf "holy place" — or for that last piece of Shaitan's Athame (which is the stranger's inheritance, which she wears around her neck, and which she is loath to relinquish).

These distinctions matter only because the separate forms of conflict can be woven or layered together, in a single story, to salutary effect. Perhaps things start as the cell realizes that a restaurant they'd had disagreement over investigating previously has a particularly troubling slime oozing from its grease trap. The Hunters visit and ask to speak with the manager, but he rudely asks them to leave. The cell finds itself followed by local police, who harass its members and ticket the driver (planting a seed for a later story). The Hunters return after dark and witness an obviously unnatural creature — with still-dissolving pets visible throughout its translucent "body" — slithering into the grease trap. Before the Hunters can draw down on the monster, though, a trio of teens arrives to use improvised flamethrowers against the thing. The fight goes badly, the Hunters successfully intervene and defeat the whatever-the-fuck-it-is, but in the fracas, the youngsters scatter, and private security for the restaurant rolls up to capture a kid or two. Regrouping afterward, the Hunters debate whether to rescue the captives, who are likely to face a new set of problems… or, precariously, what if those teenagers suddenly decide they need to become Hunters?.

When?

The question of when encompasses in-game passage of time and ways of exploiting this storytelling element. The most important wisdom on this topic has roots in antiquity: *in medias res*, Latin for "in the middle of the thing," which guides a Storyteller to have some inciting episode occur before the tale itself opens for the characters' interaction. What underlies this principle is that broader sense of economy telling us that stories are like real life, minus the boring parts (plus monster-hunters, in this case).

Determining which parts of your story could be skipped to get in more of the decisive emotional moments can be tricky. Ideally, players will give you honest feedback to compliment successful storytelling and critique its opposite. If candor is in short supply, players might send such messages in other ways: Cell members growing exceptionally aggressive and attacking anyone they meet could be a signal to pick up the pace.

You can go too far in the other direction, though: Multiple characters (and their players) asking one another, "What's going on?" could be a call for more clarity and/or less speed in plot progression. A good indicator of what players want to do through their characters comes with which traits they choose—someone with a high Investigation Skill wants to play sleuth.

Another practical challenge involving time is how long respites between Storyteller-anticipated conflicts (in contrast with the aforementioned picked fights incited by players eager for more action than they are for emotion) ought to be. Because the Reckoning is effectively a desperate war, individual skirmishes can be regular occurrences but not ubiquitous ones. A counterexample: Imagine that the cell escapes one set of enemies only to land within striking distance of another. Yes, **Hunter** charts a war, but try to make room for the combatants to take a breath, nurse wounds, and reflect on their losses or wins before they again have to take up arms. Indeed, much of the Hunter effort is spent investigating and preparing, and Hunters whose response to everything is to shoot first and figure everything out later don't last long.

Finally, some rules of thumb regarding when to insert breaks during gameplay and between game sessions: Whereas face-to-face play in times before a global health crisis might've been hampered by having fewer bathrooms available than players who might need to use them simultaneously, now the opposite is true, with players likely to wander away as thirst, hunger, or their natural inclinations may move them. To have everyone present as play, and its unfolding story, occurs, brief regular breaks are recommended, especially just before the start of a scene or a scene projected to be emotional.

When it comes to deciding what moment to end a session, the spirit of play can sometimes be more willing than the flesh is strong. Watch for nodding heads or drooping eyes; sometimes, of course, one or more players might tell you when synchronous play, whether in person or via an online format, has gone on too long. Three to four hours is a routine length, but mileage for you and your players may vary, and it might not apply at all for asynchronous games played via virtual tabletop. If you can stick to a schedule, try to leave the players in a cliffhanger situation at session's end: The Hunters witness the werewolf change shape on the rooftop in silhouette against the smoggy moon. A misstep reveals the rescue effort once the cell is already inside the vampire's penthouse. All three of the org teams the Hunters have recently negotiated with surround them as the actual quarry escapes. What will happen? *Find out next session!*

Where?

For many people whose groups are physically decentralized or for those who prefer particular suites of game-space tools, gathering around a virtual tabletop is a burgeoning space for group storytelling. Even before and after pandemics, VTTs have a lot to offer. Many telepresence software platforms allow for digital alteration of backgrounds and the sharing of handouts that can illustrate game-world realities. Go nuts with industriscapes and corporate boardrooms, alleyways and urban wastelands, twilight wildernesses and hyperchromatic nightclubs. Share mockup handouts and dossiers; make incriminating marks on blueprints. Use photos as surveillance-drone evidence. We've taken similar inspirations for the layout of this book.

Absent such tools, you can always fall back on the simplicity of mood lighting — another way of saying low light. Don't go so far that players' features become tough to discern, as one person's reaction to an unexpected outcome can influence the reactions of others. Think of the ancient place stories were told: beside the communal fire. If candlelight can be deployed safely and with the aforementioned level of visibility, that may be a way to go. Elsewise, strive for faces amid shadow. Either way, use a reading lamp or mobile-phone flashlight to see dice results, rules, and the like, or look them up in the virtual tool.

How?

Although this entire chapter constitutes instructions on the how-to of being a Storyteller for a roleplaying game, this subsection distills what amounts to (or perhaps passes for) wisdom in this specialized domain.

Perhaps most importantly, consider the philosophy behind improvisational theater. The "Yes, and" sensibility central to improv — which guides participants in a collaborative enterprise to accept every idea and add to it — opens the storytelling session to some strange places that throws of the dice and the whims of imaginative players can make memorable. Plus, an improv mindset hones your ability to think on your feet, which is invaluable, even when you're seated for several hours at a time.

At least one longtime player of storytelling games refers to them as games for hams — a term meant, in this context, to label an eagerness for acting more than some propensity to overdo it. Having at least one ham among your players is an advantage; having one as the Storyteller is nigh essential. After all, the Storyteller portrays all the allies, all the opponents, all the passers-by, and everyone else whom the characters portrayed by the players encounter. Being able to make all those imagined folks distinct and fun is a true challenge. Resee the paragraph on improv, won't you?

Feedback is a two-way street. A Storyteller who wants honest commentary on what's working vs. what's not, game-wise, must be prepared to offer it to players. Is the cell's Faithful Hunter consistently behaving more like the Martial creed? If so, that choice might be okay, but an outside-the-game mention to the player of the differences in demeanor between those two characters might be warranted. Does the player have a backstory or in-game objectives justifying such a departure? If so, let it go.

Finally, with regard to rules, the Storyteller should consider them to be more like… suggestions. Make your story what gives you and your players the most pleasure. That Mossberg Madness kill-spree chronicle, whose relentless sameness gets questioned elsewhere in this very chapter? If it works for you, pump that action! Rules are great for language, every word of which people made up; for some things as serious as gameplay that tries to counterfeit whole worlds inside people's heads, best to recognize that rules have their limits. Much like the ways that some words have more than one acceptable spelling, that multiple prepositions work to convey a specific meaning, that slang is totally legit, whichever route you take through this book to shape the **Hunter** story you collectively want to tell is the correct one. Enjoy.

No Masters

Many roleplaying games call the person in your position some variation on the term "Master." Very intentionally, World of Darkness games use the term "Storyteller" instead. Use this language to understand your role in the troupe's experience. Position yourself where your story feels player-driven and player-focused. You're not a dictator, but rather a co-creator of the story.

Be proactive in your interaction with the players to make them feel like the story is theirs. Ask leading questions such as "How does your character react to this grisly discovery?" "What's motivating your character to track those bloody animal footprints?" or, "How exactly does your character go about sneaking into the vampire's lair?" These questions will advance the story and often establish new elements that you can revisit in future parts of the chronicle.

As much as possible, avoid a reactive position, wherein the players constantly turn to you to ask, "What's next?" This style can lead to players feeling that the game is scripted and with few options for them to make their own mark.

This can seem intimidating. Giving this level of control can make it feel impossible to prepare your session and like you'll be making it up as you go along. Some Storytellers thrive in that environment, but there are ways to prep that allow for maximum flexibility as well. See the Scenes and the Breathing Room sections below.

The concept of No Masters also works to heighten the sense of dread and horror in the chronicle. While you, the Storyteller, want to present a collaborative experience, you're also presenting a form of entertainment where none of the players' characters are fully in control. Since they also lack complete control of the narrative, a Hunter chronicle should at the best of times feel barely within the grasp of the cell. Use this No Masters concept to introduce new questions, frightening discoveries, and unexpected horror that reinforces the idea that in **Hunter**, the cell can turn one wrong corner and become the hunted and ultimately the prey.

The Storyteller Cheerleader

Always act as an advocate for the players and their characters. You want the players to be engaged with your chronicle, their characters to experience an exciting arc in line with player expectation and to tell a great collaborative story along the way. You're not in opposition to them, but neither are you one of the Hunters. Your role is to present information and conflicts that challenge their abilities and make them feel a sense of accomplishment and to tell a compelling story. The Hunters shouldn't expect to "win" every interaction, and there's a lot they're never going to know — but you might.

Because of this, regularly check yourself for an adversarial mindset. The Storyteller can always defeat the players' characters, especially in **Hunter**. But that's not the goal of playing a **Hunter** chronicle. It's likely the end of your chronicle. It can also lead to players not trusting you as a future Storyteller. Even when running your players' characters through an absolute mental and physical grinder, always strive for an exciting, collaborative, and engaging story that the troupe will enjoy.

Be excited when the players are excited, and congratulate them when they take down that unknown horror. Commiserate with them when the dice just aren't going their way. Give them your full attention when they're talking. In all of this, you want to feel like a co-creator, not yourself an antagonist to be overcome.

Another great example of this is celebrating a player character's death. It's very easy for the entire troupe to be heartbroken when a character, especially a particularly experienced Hunter, takes that final stand. Months or years into your chronicle, when the former pastor charges against their oathbound quarry to save another cell member, knowing it will be their death, the weight of this decision will be a big moment in the chronicle!

EXAMPLES IN PLAY

Toward the final phase of your chronicle, the cell has tracked the antagonist to Camp Northstar, a summer camp currently in mid-season. The evil spirit possesses Eva's cellphone, convincing her that her girlfriend is choosing now, of all times, to end their relationship. This distraction is fatal, though not for Eva. With Eva's attention elsewhere, the poltergeist strikes at Samir. He's near the campfire at the center of the gathering place, drawn to it by its odd behavior. A bench slides across the clearing, knocking Samir into the fire and pinning him in the conflagration. The grim scene fades to black with Samir's demise and the troupe is silent.

Consider stopping the story at that moment and check in with the players, particularly the player of the deceased character. If this was an unexpected turn of events, perhaps finish the scene and stop the story for the night. Work with the troupe to introduce a new character and build excitement about what comes next for that player. If it's at a pivotal moment, make it important and memorable — accomplishment through sacrifice. Unless your troupe specifically enjoys the horror of a sudden and tragic death, avoid these for players' characters.

After the game, talk with the troupe and help with decompression. Share your favorite memories of the characters and encourage others to do the same. See if they have any needs or wants that can make their way into the chronicle such as scenes of remembrance. This sort of aftercare can be essential in World of Darkness games, and Hunter is no exception.

Run With the Premise

For a number of reasons, you and the players picked **Hunter** as your storytelling experience. With that come some elements, tone, and concepts that are unique to **Hunter**. Embrace them. Embody them. This is essential for both the Storyteller and the players. Players should be rewarded for taking risky character-appropriate actions because that makes an exciting story. Storytellers keep the monsters terrifying, both in their ability and inability.

Lean into the Hunter experience and encourage your players to do the same:

- Most **Hunter** characters lack in-game knowledge. They're probably very new at this, and every Hunt is a foray into a dangerous unknown. Bad decisions yield interesting narrative outcomes. Rally your players to pursue that half-baked raid on the vampire's flunky to get vengeance on the death of a beloved non-player character.
- Allies may prove to be unreliable or untrustworthy. During the Hunt, a pivotal moment may reveal a betrayal: An individual's death was set up by a supposed friend.
- Stress the importance of teamwork. Call attention to how beneficial it was to have the entire cell's aptitudes available for different scenes. Let each Hunter's skillset shine in unique ways, such as mollifying guard dogs if a player's character is invested

in Animal Ken or disabling an electronic security system using Larceny, for example.

- By the same token, lone-wolf activity is probably stressful and risky. Structure your conflicts during the raid to amply the perception of danger in direct response to how few Hunters are in a scene.
- If a great sacrifice saves the day or other players' characters, celebrate this as the right decision.

Player Engagement

Understand Your Players

When it comes to players and their characters, the best answers ask more questions, as stories emerge from them. Even if you've known your players for years, pointed questions can draw details out of them that can make the story more engaging. While the two of you chat about characters, ask some specific questions to draw information out about the player also.

Some suggested questions: Why are you playing this character? What is something you personally love, hate, find scary, find amusing, or find tempting? Do you like action-adventure stories? How about relationships and personal stories? Do you enjoy intrigue, both between characters and between the player and the story? Do you prefer sociological or psychological storytelling?

It's Always About the Players' Characters

Regardless of the machinations of deathless monsters or insidious organizations, the story is ultimately about this particular cell fighting against a supernatural foe that probably outclasses them on its own terms. It's easy when the adversity is so much larger and powerful than the players' characters to let the story become the adversary's story instead. The players and their characters are always the decision-makers whose choices push the story forward.

For example, if a murder is linked to a monster and you want the players to really care, connect one of the victims to a meaningful element of one or more of their characters. The victim's death can complicate a Drive or Ambition, or draw from an established emotional connection. If an urban legend about missing people is part of your chronicle, have one of those missing people be a loved one. If you include corruption in a trusted organization such as a shelter or place of faith, have it be one related to a Hunter's past or present — perhaps they drummed out of an org and went their own way, and this sort of thing is why.

The players and their characters are always the decision-makers whose choices push the story forward.

Given their character focus, players will generally draw a personal connection between their characters and the events of the story. Given the way you've storytelling games work, it may well feel that the world itself is out to crush these Hunters that dare to stand against the darkness — and because the story is about them, *it is*. That doesn't mean every character's effort is doomed; you simply want players to appreciate the challenges before them and the stakes of their chosen way of life.

Monsters Are Mirrors

Every interaction with a monster is a chance to shine a light into a dark place in a Hunter's personal life they might prefer not to acknowledge. (That's the *Hunter's* personal life, not *player's*.) It also engages the player and helps their emotional buy-in.

This is a fine line to walk, but at some point you want the Hunters to be able to understand the monsters, and maybe even sympathize with them a bit. They're not just "born of the stuff of evil," targets lined up to be mowed down. At the same time, a monster

is ultimately that: monstrous, and a threat to humankind. To stretch the metaphor, these are fun-house mirrors, giving back distorted, confusing, and perhaps frightening images. However alien their wants, plans, and desires might seem to the characters, they are the primary antagonists of the chronicle. Discovering and understanding the monsters' *why* in addition to their *how* is a great opportunity to call attention to Hunters' own personalities.

One way to use this device is to make some of the characters sympathetic to the monster's plight, but drive others to Desperation by reflecting different elements in the players' characters' Drives and goals. For example, an investigation reveals a recently settled werewolf in a nature preserve is actually on the run because their home is gone from human development. That detail can easily call forth sympathy for the devil (or werewolf, in this case) and cause the Hunters to question what they're defending. Add to that same legwork how the werewolf's presence haunts the hikers, joggers, and nature lovers who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Shine a light on characteristics of those people that reflect elements of the players' characters and you can be sure some of the characters will be ready to decorate with werewolf skin rugs. Others might be torn. Where does the story go now? Do the players chase off the werewolf, turning them out again into danger (and making them someone else's problem)? Do they find out what forced them to run from their previous home, worried that an unknown threat will drive more and more monsters into the area? Or do they lock and load and hope to rid the world of another monster, while others in the cell are locked in a moral dilemma about the readiness of violent solutions from their Hunter companions?

By calling out to character and player investments and interests, the entire experience gains depth and player interest. This can keep the game from turning into a monster-of-the-week shooting gallery.

The mirror needn't always be a sympathetic reflection. A vampire-led drug ring may directly evoke a Hunter's battles with addiction. Have a character who comes from a background of institutional power such as a powerful clergy or police force? Leverage that with a monstrous cult that reflects darker elements of power and influence.

THE COMBAT QUESTION

As mentioned in the rules chapter, the Storyteller System isn't designed with a huge amount of tactical combat in mind: "Just enough" is the intention.

For a game like Hunter in which violence is the frequent least common denominator, some troupes may prefer to play through combats with the intention of ticking every last available Health box for the antagonists' trackers.

At the same time, many troupes will prefer the narrative focus of the game, with a "Three Turns and Out" approach to combat (see p. 120) or letting a single roll determine the conflict's outcome, and then providing narrative detail to give it context (see "Using Dice" on p. 110).

Come to agreement on what the troupe prefers and run with it! You can always change approaches for specific conflicts or even completely reassess your decision at any time.

Character Design

This might sound like an odd concept to include in the Storyteller chapter, but the Storyteller should be just as involved and invested in character creation as the players. This will help you understand what the player wants from this character and the story, which makes planning future elements and interactions easier and more impactful.

Eyes Wide Open

Every Hunter has seen something that puts them into the business of tracking down monsters. Discuss this with players to find out what this thing was and if the character even understands it. You'll want to refer back to these cornerstone moments when the character stopped being oblivious and became a Hunter. Use a natural, conversational approach to help talk through what Creed and Drive fits the Hunter the best — and if the character actually has that Drive or belongs to that Creed. Many players enjoy playing against type, and many characters become more interesting if they haven't made the obvious choices in their pasts.

Perhaps the Hunter came from a neighborhood notorious for crime, a graffiti artist angry at the number of friends and companions they've lost to whatever stalks the shadows, with a chip on their shoulder and a spray can in each hand. Such a Hunter might feel a pull toward the Underground Creed and a Drive centered upon Vengeance.

A completely different Hunter could be a medical examiner who witnessed a corpse get up and walk out of their morgue. Absolutely mesmerized, they followed the walking corpse until they peeked around a dumpster to see it savaging the neck of a victim. This Hunter fits well in the Inquisitive Creed and likely has a Drive of Curiosity.

But what if those concepts were paired instead with the other's Creed and Drive?

Once you and the player establish key elements of the Hunter's concept, next is to expand that to what motivates them. Some suggested questions are: What does the player feel are their character's strengths and weaknesses? What an important moment from their character's past that has nothing to do with being a Hunter? Why does your character have such a high rank in a particular Skill and how does the player see that impacting the chronicle? Does that mean the player wants to see that particular skill come up regularly in the chronicle? Does it mean they want it to be a spotlight moment, when their character stands out as invaluable and important to the story? During this process, look for opportunities to interconnect the players' characters. Dependencies and relationships build investment, after all.

What a Tangled Web

Another essential thing to discuss with your players is why their characters trust each other. For a number of reasons, against these overwhelming odds, these are the people they've turned to who watch their back, tend to their wounds, and act as their support network. Bring your troupe together and talk about these reasons for their Hunters collaboratively. Are some here for safety in numbers? Others because they feel a responsibility? And it's best when it's not neat: Hunters might have conflicting reasons or even reasons that aren't reciprocated by another Hunter. These relationships might start simple, but will become gloriously messy and complicated as game play continues. Work with players early on to lay out the relationship hooks that link them together during character creation and later snarl, pull, tangle, and even untangle those relationships when you want to draw attention to a particular element.

Most likely, some of the players' characters will be in the same Cell because they share common goals, outlooks, Creeds, or Drives. People often naturally gravitate toward those who see the world similar to them. However, other characteristics of the Hunters can also bring them together. Siblings, spouses, even multi-generational ties; these all make for strong initial bonds between characters that can be complicated by contentious (and perhaps secretive) desires that emerge during play. Revelations or reminders of past wrongs, presenting hard choices between a family member and a crucial story element, and even issues of trust between cell members who aren't family members are great ways to introduce stress into the chronicle.

Bleed

Bleed involves the emotions of characters "bleeding out" and impacting the real-world emotions of the players (or vice versa). It's important to remember these complicated, complex, and possibly toxic relationships are between the players' characters only and not between members of the troupe. It is always important to keep the identity of the Hunter and the player distinct and separate.

If your chronicle involves challenging and emotionally charged relationships between players' characters, it is the responsibility of the Storyteller to check in with their players for Bleed. We suggest doing this one-on-one between games, but also employ other table-safety methods during gameplay such as the X Card and Stoplight System covered in the Considerate Play appendix.

Story Design

Knowing Is Half the Battle

In practice, it's more than half. The assumption **Hunter** makes is that approximately three-quarters of a Hunter story will consist of investigation and preparation. During this part of the story, the troupe will get a feel for their characters, the chronicle, and their adversaries. They may face low-level threats such as human thralls, ghouls, or weird cultists pledged to the main quarry as they discern the monster's objectives. This is also an opportune time to explore the aspects of the **Hunter** fantasy that evoke a sense of being the underdog, of fighting against the odds — teamwork, the unknown, and possibly tragic ignorance (see p. 24). These experiences, both positive and negative, should help the Hunters understand and ultimately face off against the quarry.

Examples of the types of challenges in this portion of the Hunt include the following.

- **Questions that lead to more questions:** While searching the apartment of a missing friend, the Hunters find a small vial. Oh analysis, it's human blood... mostly.
- **Leverage their allies:** The strange vial seems the key to their missing friend. Do they reach out to

one of the Hunter's occultist friends or another Hunter's contacts in a bio-science corporation?

- **What have they gotten themselves into?:** Asking questions about the blood has attracted the wrong sort of attention. A pair of toughs show up to bully the Hunters into turning their attentions elsewhere.
- **Strength in numbers:** The toughs would have eradicated any individual one of the Hunters. But, as a cell, they survived the encounter, and got more intel and a much- needed morale boost.

Note, too, that these conflicts need not be resolved physically, or even be physical in nature. Perhaps the pursuing flunkies are no match for one of the Hunters' evasive driving skills, or instead of a couple of bat-wielding brutes, the quarry is protected by a curse that makes it impossible for anyone to describe it. How to deal with these? That's all part of the investigation and preparation.

Hunter then assumes that the remaining portion of each story will consist of the cell determining how to stop the antagonist, and then the actual climactic confrontation itself. Often, more of this time will be spent on further preparation and investigation. Ideally at this point in the chronicle, the cell has an idea of what it's facing and the Hunters can start leveraging their plans for how to confront it, deal with it, and hopefully survive. This part of the story may revisit other Hunter themes, as well. For example, once the cell members know they're dealing with a vampire, those militantly religious allies might try to force them to act dangerously early, hoping to flush out the undead and "secure the operation" themselves. With allies like this...

Further examples of investigation and preparation include the following:

- **Weaknesses are discovered:** A dead-drop from its allies gives the cell a possible upper hand. The bloodlike substance in the vial reacts violently to silver nitrate, far more aggressively than normal for human tissue.
- **Discovery and conjecture:** At this point, the Hunters might put a name to what they're hunting based on their evidence. Does the blood make them think vampires are involved or is the silver leading them toward werewolves? What other clues do they have to guide them?
- **Finding the lair:** This is also when the cell is likely to lock on to the main antagonist's base of operations. With that information they can schedule stake outs, pull CCTV footage, or reach out to allies in municipal circles to find out about permits, blueprints, or utilities.

With the remaining portion of the story, the cell is ready to face down the quarry. This will likely be the most tense, action-packed, and deadly portion of the story, as the cell moves from observation mode into possibly direct confrontation with the primary antagonist. The Hunters will be faced with how far they're willing to go and how much they're willing to lose to, in the end, rid the world of at least one more monster — if eliminating the monster is actually their plan.

Ideally at this point in the chronicle, the cell has an idea of what it's facing and the Hunters can start leveraging their plans for how to confront it, deal with it, and hopefully survive.

Interesting complications for a story's final confrontation include the following:

- **Betrayal:** The Hunters have talked to many supposed allies at this point to gain much needed information. Has one of those allies turned on them, perhaps having contaminated their sample with silver nitrate to throw them off the trail?
- **Split-second decision making:** Keep action moving. The technician thinks they can manually detonate the silver-nitrate bomb, but it won't be pretty. Do they make that ultimate sacrifice, or does the cell retreat and regroup, knowing they might not get this chance again?
- **The world is much bigger:** While raiding the quarry's lair, the Cell finds out the drug intentionally makes the user's body toxic to another supernatural parasite. The antagonist is certainly immoral, but do their ends justify the means? Is this the right monster to take out?

This concept isn't meant to say a story should only follow these phases once, though that's a perfectly valid story design. It can also be used as a series of these discover-prepare-conflict loops, as the troupe uncovers layers and layers of what proves to extend beyond a single story into a longer chronicle. These loops can even nest and overlap, as the cell struggles to cope with one antagonist while discovering elements about that monster's master or even adversary. (Overlapping cycles leads to perhaps the most complex chronicle from an information standpoint, so be sure everyone in the troupe wants this level of investment.)

Tracking All The Pieces

Visual representations of your chronicle can be invaluable to keep things flowing as it progresses and just as valuable to adjust when the unexpected happens. We've illustrated some elements of the Hunt in this book to help communicate concepts quickly, and you can use the same approach. Consider some of the following visual tools for use in your chronicle.

FLOWCHARTS AND NODE DIAGRAMS

A flowchart depicts a sequence of events, and can be easily adapted to your chronicle's key resolutions. Certain actions will activate certain elements in the story and possibly shut off other avenues. It also lets you track progression through your chronicle if you're aiming for a set number of sessions, clues, or antagonists. Digital flowcharts allow you to easily add or remove elements as the chronicle evolves, rebuilding event flows as you add story goodies.

Sometimes called a network diagram, node diagrams are useful to plot out the scenes in an individual story. Since this style of diagram encourages multiple paths between the nodes, it will prompt you to consider multiple ways to move from scene to scene and still experience the full story. An excellent companion to the node diagram is a notecard related to each of the nodes (see "Deadtree Edition" on p. 136).

MINDMAPS

A mindmap is a collection of ideas that can be connected to one another to demonstrate relationships or hierarchies. For chronicles that are more freeform rather than sequentially planned, they can be a way to visually illustrate who's connected to whom, how, and various clues or locations related to them. This is perfect for a more "sandbox" style of chronicle where "the truth is out there" just waiting for Hunters to discover it on their own terms, rather than in response to specific story beats.

PLAYER INVOLVEMENT

An exciting way to include the entire troupe in tracking the chronicle is the classic "murder board." While it's a trope perhaps overused, it's tactile and just plain fun to put up clues, ideas, and images and then connect them all with string. It's an especially participatory approach if your troupe plays in the same location each week and dedicates some wall space to permanently hang the murder board for the chronicle's duration.

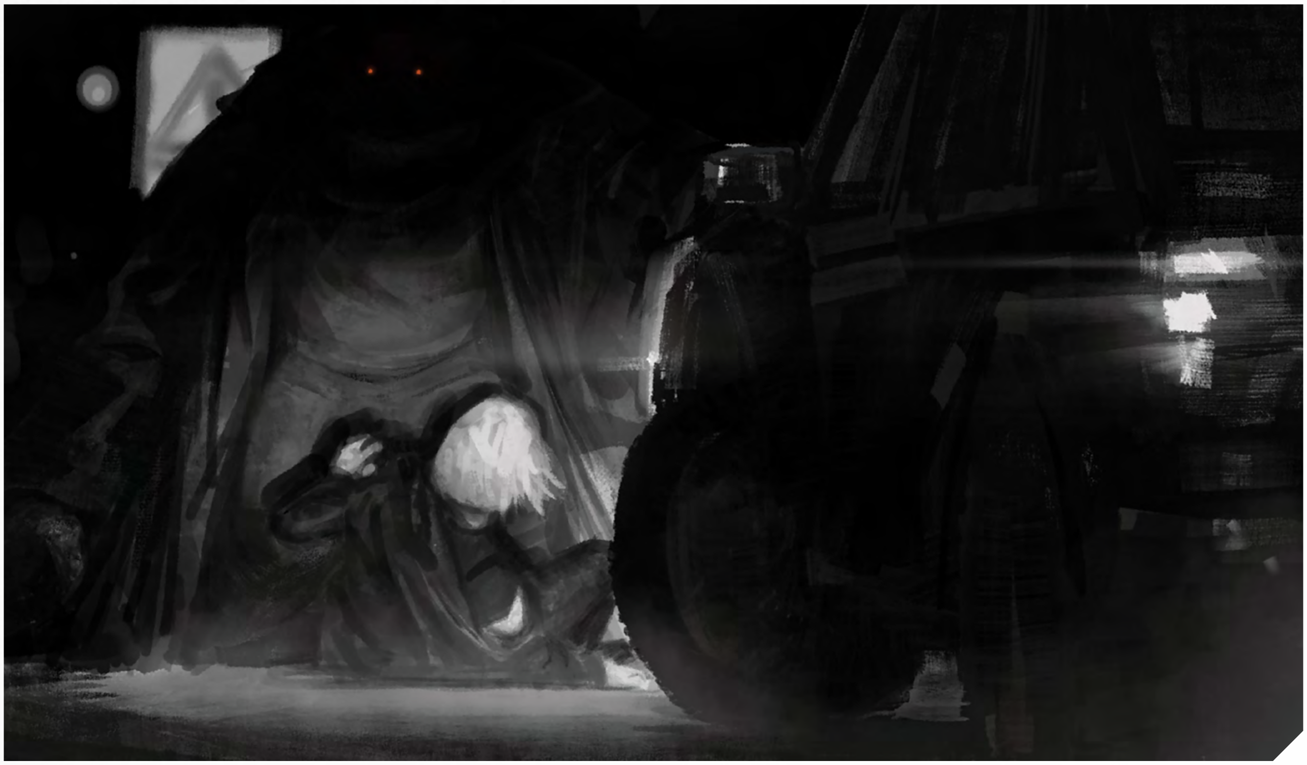
Concepts to Concrete Examples

A big part of designing a chronicle, story, and even a scene is to bring in the concepts of Hunter in such a way that the players naturally feel those keystone elements of the game. This regular reinforcement of the essential experiences of Hunter will make your chronicle feel uniquely different from other World of Darkness chronicles.

Hunters Are Underdogs

The most consistent concept to emphasize in your chronicle is that Hunters are humans fighting a lopsided war. Alone, they'd be overwhelmed, just another victim. Together, with their cell, they're still easily overwhelmed, but now they have a chance. And that spark of a chance carries them forward.

This is why there are no "fodder" antagonists in a **Hunter** story. **Hunter** isn't about steel-eyed heroes mowing through hordes of mindless monsters, it's about flawed individuals fighting against the odds to hopefully shine a light against the encroaching darkness.



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Hunter Alex Lathem finds herself in an abandoned parking garage. She's called the rest of her cell, but her player leans into her Drive of Curiosity. She's snuck into the darkened structure to check it out. Many floors down, she spots a roll-down security door. She sneaks over to see if she can bypass it with Larceny. She doesn't hear the shambling thing until something monstrously strong batters her to her feet. As her flashlight clatters to the ground, she sees a hulking form blocking her escape.

Dr. Skaar and Ed drive Ed's late-model SUV dangerously close to its limits. This thing is made for the wilderness, not the bleak flatland of Nowhere, USA. They can't reach Alex's cell phone and know her habit of getting ahead of herself. Racing into the parking garage, Ed flips on the light bar on the top of the SUV, only to have it ripped off at the next Vehicle Height Limit sign. Eight inches too tall, goddammit.

Alex hears the smash and roaring engine. So does the looming thing. It turns momentarily toward the sound as the truck barrels into lower level. Crashing through a mechanical barrier and breaking a headlight, Ed angles the truck to interpose it between Alex and what the fuck is that. He snatches the hunting rifle from the back seat and tries to demand the creature's attention. Dr. Skaar slips out the other side and hustles the dazed Alex into the back seat.

"Ed! I got her, we're done here!" Skaar's deep voice booms.

Jumping back into the driver's seat, Ed's got the SUV moving again before he even has the door fully shut. It was close, but the three of them survived. Or have they?

"We have a problem." Skaar deadpans. "Alex is losing blood, and a lot of it."

Common Goals Don't Always Make for Easy Allies

A cell may come into contact with many different factions with their own agendas. They may feel tempted to make a deal for the information, assistance, and resources of rival orgs if they hope to gain the advantage on their quarry. But it's always at risk of being a devil's deal: At any moment, the cell can become a disposable asset in the situation room of an organization's pursuits. These relationships often exist on a knife-edge and that can be used to ramp up tension. And, perhaps

even more jarring, sometimes longtime colleagues will betray a Hunter or cell for their own reasons.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

On a tip from a contact in BOPE, the Hunters find themselves in Rio de Janeiro to investigate some odd deaths. They're being labeled as animal attacks, but the cell knows better from past experiences with Cloverleaf, a known local operation more interested in profit than people.

It's not long into the story before the cell realizes they've been played against Cloverleaf by their contact. Seems Cloverleaf is experimenting with some risky genetic experimentation and has lost control of its latest pet project, some kind of humanoid hemovore. The Cell is now the bait to draw this thing out so their contact's unit can capture it. Double-crossed, the cell is now running for its lives from both the blood-thirsting monster and the authorities whose trap they've survived.

Hunters Prepare and Investigate

Or, perhaps more accurately, Hunters *strive* to be prepared and informed. The balance of information is almost always never in the cell's favor. The constant tension in the game will be "do we know enough?" and "are we really as prepared as we think?" This prompts a thrilling intensity of risk and reward, forcing the Hunters to decide between gathering more information and taking action to stop the quarry from claiming another victim.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Parminder and Taz are abroad during a public-health lockdown. They've uncovered a bit of folklore about their quarry: Local legend says the mere mention of one's name will give this strange individual power over you. The thing is, there's not exactly an abundance of hard data as to whether this is true or what it represents if it isn't true. And the other two cell members don't yet know this, both because of the lockdown isolation and the possible inaccuracy of the information itself. Do Taz and Parminder run the risk of "mentioning" the other Hunters by communicating while abroad? Does thinking about them earn them the creature's attention?

As a sort of side stipulation, the Storyteller declares that if any player refers to one of the Hunters by name before Parminder and Taz manage to leave the creature's territory, it's the same as a players' character using it in-game… with as-yet unknown consequences.

The Value of Sacrifice

In a **Hunter** chronicle, what the cell considers success often comes at a cost. This may literally be a human cost, in the form of the quarry's victims, but it almost certainly takes on a personal cast as well. Sure, some Hunters will carry lifelong physical scars, or perhaps even die, when confronting their enemy, but other sacrifices can be mental health, relationships, careers, and personal comfort. And Hunter communities are rife with accounts of Hunters who have sacrificed their own humanity, becoming a monster to hunt one.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Melanie and her cell have infiltrated the mansion of a rumored warlock named Ironwick. She's the team's breaking-and-entering specialist and is disarming an improvised explosive device on a door blocking their exit path while the rest look for his grimoire. Without warning, the door opens and she finds herself face to face with Ironwick!

Melanie never hesitates. Clipping the wrong wire intentionally, she closes her eyes just before the detonation floods the hallway with fire and smoke.

The explosion warns her cell to run, not knowing what happened to Melanie. She's okay with that. In the end, she saved them now when she couldn't save the others from her past.

Now... was that actually Ironwick?

Advanced Techniques: Scenes and Sets

The nature of collaborative storytelling is the excitement of never quite knowing where the story will take the characters next.

When thinking about your story design, a flexible method is to imagine it as collections of information and experiences, referred to here as scenes, and not a linear storyboard like commonly used in movies or novel design. The Storyteller isn't a movie director, with dictatorial power over the outcome. They set the scene and interpret the outcome of the players' actions, an exercise in creative back-and-forth.

Build individual scenes that accomplish goals of the story, each providing a specific piece of information, exposing the characters to a new story element, or presenting an interesting interaction. When designing these Scenes, focus on the experiences and information of the scene and less on the physical location or description. By building the scene as a collection of story elements instead of a complete experience with firmly determined Storyteller characters, locations, etc., you'll feel more flexible to adapt your story to player interaction.

EXAMPLE:

The Storyteller knows the players will need to discover the thumb drive with the Orpheus Group's Kolkata mission data. The thumb drive might be in either of the Orpheus agents' backpacks, or it might be discovered in one of the three field offices the Hunter cell plans to investigate. The Storyteller is flexible, knowing that the players will eventually find the information, and will make the final call based on interactions the players have. Since the Storyteller knows that the Hunters will discover the information eventually, having it appear at a dramatically appropriate time creates value to the story. Failure isn't interesting in the particular question of, "Will the Hunters discover the thumb drive?" — the interesting part comes in how they obtain the information, not if.

In addition to these scenes, prepare a series of locations where parts of your story could happen. Think of these as Sets. Usually, it's best to keep Sets incompletely defined, so you can adapt them as needed. If the story goes somewhere you haven't planned, involve your players and keep the story moving by having them take an active part in describing the Set. Ask questions that provide broad strokes of narrative detail and emotional context. The players stop at a bar to decompress after a heavy reveal in the session, but you didn't expect that. Ask them questions like: What type of music is playing in the bar? Who do you recognize? How's the bar staff's attitude? Who just got bounced? Keep it quick and engaging: Ask no more than one question per player and prompt them to keep responses brief and open for others to add to.

Scenes and Sets meet as the story progresses. As the story naturally moves forward, decide what scene would best fit at that point. What experience do you want to present the players with next? Now, overlay that scene with one of the Sets in your mental catalog or one collaboratively presented by everyone at the table. This approach makes every scene feel natural and important. This can also cut down on Storyteller fatigue, because you can continually advance the story and not feel like you need to make up a "filler" scene on the spot until you get things back on track.

Scenes and Sets In Action

To illustrate this concept, here are three examples. In each example, the players want their characters to come back together and discuss things they've discovered while apart. They picked a Set for their meeting place: a diner. The Storyteller didn't plan for this, but has three scenes they want to bring into the current story, "New Drug on the Street," "Somebody's Watching Me," and "Where's My Sister," each scene related to a character's Ambition.

NEW DRUG ON THE STREET

After a few leading questions from the Storyteller, the players describe the diner as shiny, brightly lit, and other elements that suggest (comparative) safety. The troupe runs with that idea; the diner is new to town, probably a franchise. It's got a gimmick of a 1940s soda fountain and seems like the safest place imaginable. There's an employee dressed as a soda jerk, far too chipper for the setting, and a mix of patrons at the counter. It's kitschy but not corny. The Hunters pile into a corner booth and start to compare notes and share discoveries.

At this point, the players are getting what they need out of the scene, reconvening and planning what's next. The Storyteller doesn't interrupt this, but as players step out of the spotlight, slides a few of them notes or has a quick side-conversation with odd orders they're overhearing at the counter. "Can I get a phosphate with some Pep?" "Make mine a Lime Rickey, double Pep." And so on. The Storyteller intends that this will spark a player's curiosity enough to have their character look behind the counter. Everything looks normal, a sea of black-topped pump handles, except for one at the far end. The handle is bright red and has a white "P" stamped on it.

SOMEBODY'S WATCHING ME

In this set, the players describe something quite dissimilar to the previous example, a dump of a diner redolent of cigarette smoke and old grease. It's a noir staple and the players have really leaned into the darker side of Hunter. The patrons are scattered, sitting individually in lonely booths, worn down and tired-looking. There's an old jukebox droning songs decades past their popularity. The staff is gruff and transactional, with terse responses like "Orders?" and refilling coffee cups or taking plates without asking. The Storyteller's plan here is to have most of the player's goals for the Scene to happen, to regroup and share information, but add tension to the scene toward the end. One of the Hunters notices someone watching the cell from another booth. There's a tense moment, like a cinematic, "Who's going to act first?" and then the eavesdropper suddenly bolts for the door. The Storyteller stresses the immediacy of the moment and cuts the conversation and asks each player, "Do you give chase or stay?"

prompting a quick, instinctual reaction over protracted reasoning.

WHERE'S MY SISTER?

This time, the players describe the sort of diner that survives by putting greasy food in the bellies of the club crowd after last call. The place is open but mostly deserted during daylight hours, so it's an ideal place for a group of misfits to talk about the actual monster they've been tailing. The waitress is talkative, obviously bored. She annoys the characters. As everyone is paying at the single old-fashioned register to leave, one of the characters notices one of the nametags stuck to the schedule-board. It's their sister's first name and looks exactly like her handwriting. The chatty waitress has suddenly become a mystery and not the initial frustration the cell had supposed.

The Art of Storytelling

Not even the most meticulously planned chronicle survives the first encounter with players, but hopefully the above techniques have you confident, prepared, and nimble to help shape the troupe's story. However, the act of playing, presenting, and experiencing the story itself presents unique opportunities to make your story memorable.

PRO TIP: YOU GOT THIS

As a Storyteller, you don't have to jump into the deep end of recursive conspiracies and Byzantine plot constructs all at once. Hunter is ultimately about the Hunt, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with a straightforward story about a monster and how a cell of Hunters deal with it. Start small, focus on making sure everyone's enjoying the story you're co-creating, and the perfect rules integrity and narrative complexities will fall into place as you're ready for them.

Be cool. Tell an engaging story. Enjoy yourselves.

During Play

The more stories you tell with your troupe, the better you'll become at the craft of storytelling. It's like a muscle — the more you use it and challenge your limits, the stronger it gets. The following ideas, techniques, and craft-hacks will help you do just that.

Surprise!

A story bereft of surprise is one that probably fails, no matter its medium. Storytelling games, thanks to their reliance upon character traits, rules, and dice (alongside their absence of scripted dialogue), pretty much have surprise baked into them. Usually that aspect proves to be a source of pleasure for all participants.

Every now and then, though, things go another way. A World of Darkness Storyteller once had a player, in the middle of the cell's freshman effort, commandeer a truck and abandon the other Hunters. The Storyteller suddenly had to run a quite bifurcated game whose gap between its two plot threads was growing by the minute. How that split got resolved is a story for another time and place. Let it suffice to say that the Storyteller's persuasive powers worked, and one of the abandoned cellies lobbed a memorably sarcastic comment upon the errant character's return.

The lesson here, however, is one numerous authors of fiction report with some regularity: As Storyteller, you'll want to outline the game's "plot," but be prepared for your characters to inform you that they have different ideas altogether. As a (different, but still wise) Storyteller once put it, "You're not scripting a scene in which no departure will happen. Rather, you're proposing a sequence of scenarios, and fabricating the connective tissue that makes them relate to one another."

Amid such a turn of events, the Storyteller needs to be able to interpret what's proving most rewarding for the players. The Storyteller also needs to be pre-

pared if some such judgment or other "feels wrong," sparks displeasure, or leads to general uprising by the players. Learning the art of being a Storyteller — rest assured, science it is not — necessarily involves an occasional misstep.

Laughing at the Reckoning

So, again with the jokes: Granted, a storyline steeped in physical horror and splatterly mayhem might seem like the wrong place to plant some potential laughs. Keep in mind, however, that first responders rely upon dark humor to get through the workday… and to be able to return the next day, and the next. As Storyteller, you can't put dialogue into the players' mouths, and using Storyteller characters in such a way isn't quite the same.

Remember, though, that the universe consists of countless things in unlikely juxtaposition. The best ones are real: that Freudian typo on the fast-food joint's signage; the fleeing squirrel that, for no reason mere mortals can discern, inserts a single cartoonish leap into an otherwise mad dash; a fragment of scorched trash whose surface resembles the most lugubrious of sad clowns. Weaving such details into a chronicle adds life to your stories, even ones cloaked in darkness.

Another means of integrating humor into the proceedings is via those aforementioned Storyteller characters — not just through what they say (though, heaven forfend, never through the way they say things [no speech impediments played for laughs, ever]) but, instead, how they phrase stuff. Consider the impedimentary bureaucrat who speaks only in monosyllables, the pharmaceutically altered infomercial star whose mile-a-minute patter defies comprehension, the toddler survivor of some massacre who finds the cell's most fearsome Hunter endlessly cuddleworthy.

Sometimes, the Reckoning Laughs Back

Perhaps the best thing about players getting used to the absurd popping up, unbidden, in a **Hunter** chronicle? Every now and then you can have a secondary reveal that the seemingly benign weirdness was anything but benign. That squirrel, turns out, was leaping over a wantonly extracted human eye. On the way back, past the fast-food joint, have the players test Awareness; success means a character remembers this franchise as having made some grim but only dimly recalled news recently. The clown-faced bit of trash squints at the Hunters and frowns before emitting a stream of curses. Remember: Terror and laughter are related in multiple ways, not least of them a tendency for one to morph into the other.

Sensitivities and Respectful Play

Another advisable precursor to your game might be to ask players to write down themes and situations that they'd consider unwelcome. Because everyone's mileage varies, and because such a list is sure to be personal, should the Storyteller choose to request a list from each player, the assembled lists ought to be kept completely private. No fair hinting to players that you know what presses their buttons!

Alternatively, the idea that any areas would be off limits in a horror game might seem quaint or even antithetical. Consider, though, that if your game serves as a refuge from real horrors unfolding beyond its fictional precincts, then dragging in a (or the) pandemic, sexual abuse, racial/ ethnic/ religious hatred or violence, and similar matters all too present in the news of late could prove poisonous for one or more participants.

How greatly a Storyteller delves into detail obviously varies. First, though, establishing what these different modes are not is important. Frightening someone differs from startling someone; the former conjures a state of mind, a set of feelings; the latter uses loud, unexpected noise. If you wouldn't do a thing to a pet, please don't do it to a player.

Likewise, use of any aroma that might engage someone's gag reflex crosses the line into theater of cruelty — emphasis on the cruelty. The same goes for use of documentary images or footage that depicts things including (but not limited to) battlefields in fresh aftermath, criminal evidence/ crime scenes, factory farming, slaughterhouses, and people or animals suffering from disease or other visible stressors.

If everybody's cool with it, sure, be as graphic as you prefer. It's critical to understand boundaries beforehand, however, and, equally as importantly, not leave anyone feeling like they're a wet blanket if their boundaries are different from those of other players. Whether you use the unlabeled list of things to avoid, an X-card or safeword to halt situations before they become too much to deal with, or table timeouts in situations of high stress, everyone participating needs to be respectful of everyone else's limits.

Nobody wants assholes detracting from what's supposed to be entertainment. We keep bringing this up because it's important.

Horror, Terror, *Dread*

One of the three things in the header immediately above is not like the others. Yes, the genre of **Hunter** is horror, itself intended to frighten As a genre, however, horror has distinct subsets, each of which operates on a slightly different emotional wavelength. In the examples beneath the "Sometimes, the Reckoning Laughs Back" header, the squirrel bit conveys horror, and the babbling trash ignites terror, but the restaurant episode fosters dread.

Put another way, the first features evidence of cruel violence committed but not witnessed; the second offers something certainly supernatural and potentially threatening; the third conjures the unknown. Usually, what frightens people most is the thought that something is afoot all around us, but what that something is remains out of reach, beyond knowing. Thus, our imaginations flow in to fill the shadows with the unspeakable.

Audio Cues

Darkness, sound effects, and possibly music (see below) can set a scene for terror, horror, or dread. If we work the preceding list in reverse order, the aural accompaniments go from subtle and sparse, through ominous and lingering, to discordant and energetic.

Some sounds to foster dread: a single note struck on a piano at either end of the keyboard (repeat as needed, but less is more); a plastic bag flapped out of the player's sight to simulate the sound of wings in the dark; scratching or scraping against an uneven wooden surface to evoke someone (or something) in desperate quest of escape.

Ones for horror: mewling like a terminal newborn; the slap-drag of a wounded person who approaches on a firm limb in alternation with a wounded (or truncated) one; mimicking the rhythm of a vast heartbeat but making clear that the sound surrounds the Hunters. For terror: a long, low growl from something far larger than anything the Hunters may have seen; titanic footfalls growing closer every second; numerous and inhuman warcries.

Staging Techniques

In the scene itself, three French terms may prove useful.

The most familiar one, *déjà vu* ("seen or perceived before"), can evoke eerie menace: the spectral doll that flickers in and out of view at ominous and random times; the cry of a forest owl in the middle of a barren desert, then a skyscrapered metropolis, then a suite of offices by night; a bloody-grilled and driverless car that stalks the cell for months.

For unsettling monsters, *presque vu* ("almost seen") is the way to go: an unsettlingly large eye that peers at the Hunters from several feet beneath the surface of an ocean… a lake… a pond; a shadowy flying thing, visible at great distance, whose wings flap to keep it aloft; a beast that "swims" desert sands the way a shark plies the water.

And for truly haunting moments, use *jamais vu* ("never seen") — and never explain the source of such phenomena: as the Hunters search a yurt on the taiga, slowly peel away the roof to reveal… nothing; during a foray underground, have the Hunter bringing up the cell's rear feel sourceless breath on their neck; while the characters are at rest, in a place they presume safe and familiar, have everyone experience solo (as in, companions vanish) a flash of ultraviolence, occurring in that space but at an unidentifiable time (The past? Some future?), that goes away as quickly as it arrives.

As for descriptive tools/ horrific elements, consider familiar things invested with unfamiliar characteristics: flesh that bubbles, writhes, or seethes; plants that bleed, fly, or speak; faces whose features are all smoothly absent, impossibly mispositioned, or biologically mismatched; such innocuous creatures as deer, rabbits, or mice possessed of ravenous bloodlust; shadows that change shape, that invert physics, that stem from no visible entity whatsoever. Even the archetypal monsters can play host to these changes: What if this particular vampire has no fangs but pulls blood to the surface through the skin, leaving turgid bruises afterward?

Finally, remember that every shade of horror requires only a sense of deep wrongness to work, even in the seemingly total absence of the supernatural: the family of four that smiles in unison at the sight of a gruesome accident; the picnic attendee who unpacks and begins to consume a panoply of raw human organs; a bureaucrat who, in mid-boilerplate, embarks on a lengthy confession to a series of colorful murders. What would be scariest about any — or all — of these scenarios would be the demonstrable noninvolvement of supernatural forces.

Music

Although music isn't a requirement for storytelling games, when well-chosen it invokes mood more swiftly and more surely than perhaps any other element. As it does in cinema, music can foreshadow, underline, or punctuate events in gaming, whether what's happening is a night chase through wilderness, political intrigue in a corporate meeting room, or inter-cell static inside a burning tenement.

If you choose to make music a regular aspect of your chronicle, cinema offers an almost endless palette in the form of film and television scores. One great advantage of using such recordings is that movies and shows come in different genres, which can be a guide if you lack familiarity with scores or know only the most recognizable ones. Granted, you might get laughs out of your players if, unintentionally, you play something incongruous and well known as background or scene-setting music, but music during the game session tends to work best if used to distill or intensify emotion, rather than to pull players out of the gaming world by exposing some other pop-culture vein.

With more than a century of cinema behind us, your choices are almost endless. The most skilled symphonic composers in the field — Bernard Herrmann, John Williams, Philip Glass — have enough work out there to let you delve deeply into their catalogues without repeat or (too much) recognition. And, yes, though Williams seems to have scored everything over the last 60 years, his horror-film scores (for example) are little known, potent, and evocative. Thriller scores also work well with **Hunter**, exist in bewildering abundance, and constitute a huge portion of Herrmann's output (for years he was Alfred Hitchcock's go-to composer). Martial music, whether from war movies or elsewhere, plays well with spikes of violent activity. Glass and Williams excel at marches. The repetitive-unto-hypnotic qualities of multiple Glass scores make great soundscapes for the strangest locales; Herrmann's many contributions to fantasy and science-fiction films are likewise suitable.

Of course, all sorts of music can bring great effects to your game, whether you use metal as accompaniment for out-come-the-weapons engagements, bebop jazz for a pursuit through the big city, or even vaporwave to lend low-level creepiness to a shopping center interior. Instrumental material is more likely to prove less distracting than anything with lyrics. Note, too, that the shopping center example (and perhaps the combat engagement, depending on where it's happening) offers an environment wherein music could be heard in a naturalistic way. Music that the characters might hear, as opposed to what only the players hear, is diegetic — that is, it occurs both around the game table and in the game world. Think of music used this way as a prop or way of advancing a story: a wraith-possessed serial killer who always blasts the same song from his car stereo as he roars up on his victims' location; a traumatized escapee from an illicit prison or lab who recalls only that Wagner was played there daily; the house, done up for Halloween, whose seasonal music deranges children within earshot.

Antagonists: Maintaining Mystery

Storytellers can preserve some of the mystery of the supernatural by obscuring game mechanics with unfamiliar sensory detail. For example, a supernatural antagonist with Strength 5 might be a hulking, muscled monstrosity akin to cinematic depictions of Frankenstein's monster, or it might be something lithe and supple, with whipcord muscles themselves as unyielding as steel traps. Thus, the Trait value Strength 5 can be represented in a variety of terms of description.

Savvy Storytellers can expand this technique to ”reskin” the entire Trait summary for an antagonist. Taking the exact same set of Traits and communicating them to players in the context of a vampire or a werewolf results in very different experiences. The werewolf, for example, might cause an irrational terror upon viewing its transformation while the vampire transfixes their victim with a paralyzing gaze. The werewolf's potential for physical violence is a "whirlwind of brutality, with flashing claws and gnashing fangs" and the vampire lays about their foes with "an unrelenting onslaught itself in defiance of the grave."

In Trait form these are simply a mobility-reducing special effect and a melee combat dice pool of 7, but the Storyteller's description has effectively created two entirely distinct experiences, two distinct monsters, and, with adept chronicle planning, two distinct chapters in the Hunters' lives with a single set of "palette-swapped" Traits.

In practice, this is why antagonist Trait sections are comparatively short. They allow Storytellers a high degree of versatility, and the players aren't going to see those Trait summaries anyway.

Keep It Strange

The characters have already had the blindfold removed and they've seen the truth of the World of Darkness, or at least a small portion of it. From that point forward, nothing is ever normal again. The events that lead to the decision to become a Hunter are transformative.

Hunter stories reinforce the idea of a secret world discovered via small bits of strangeness in the everyday. Did that suit-and-tie guy give off a scent of rot as he passed on the street? Why does that stray cat look like the exact same one that was outside of your apartment this morning?

These details don't have to have a deep meaning. The goal is to make tiny spikes of strangeness in the world, not present endless diversions from the chronicle. The players' characters should seem unhinged if they grab a passerby on the street and accuse them of something cosmically dreadful. One important aspect of being a Hunter is knowing when to engage and when to observe.

Dice Tell a Story

We've said it before, but it bears repeating. It might feel right to have every action require a matching dice roll, but dice rolling should be reserved for those moments where success or failure would change the story going forward, or if the margin of success is important.

If the roll of the dice won't make the story more interesting, don't roll the dice.

A breathless race across the city to the next scene? You make the call. If it's the change of location that's important, don't touch the dice — don't pause the story. If there's no guarantee that the Hunters will actually make it to the other side of town, though, there's an exciting narrative in the offing if that roll fails.
In other words, don't make your job as the Storyteller harder by introducing randomness when the story doesn't call for it.

Interpreting dice rolls is a matter of style. Even in a high-stakes situation where rolling dice is certainly the right call, never let a bad dice roll stop the action. (Note that specifically doesn't mean the players always get what they want….) If a scene hinges on the characters getting into the vampire's compound and they just can't seem to pick that lock, maybe there's another way into the lair. Consider also the concept of failing forward, or succeeding at a cost. Instead of shrugging and saying "Well, I guess you can't get in," perhaps one of the vampire's blood-thralls opens the door to check on all that noise outside. Now there's instant tension and action. Do they leap into action and bring down the hammer on someone who might be an oblivious housekeeper? Do they try to talk their way out of the situation even though they're on an unnoticed surveillance camera? Regardless of what they choose to do, the story keeps moving, but not in their favor. One side benefit of the Hunter acknowledgment of sacrifice is that there need never be a stalled story.

As well, celebrate wildly successful rolls. Don't necessarily stop at a character achieving their goal, give them some carryforward element. This can be something simple as a bonus to a future action or a story element, such as a nickname or street rumor of their prowess. These flavorful elements excite players and add fun quirks that don't impact the dice.

As Storyteller, you also decide when it's appropriate for you to roll dice. Many situations have obvious outcomes, and many game systems support quick and diceless adjudication. Especially if there's a situation that a player's character has no direct influence over, avoid miring yourself in "Storyteller solitaire" and rolling for a result that you could more quickly declare — and thereby prompt a player response.

Time Waits for No One

Even though chronicles focus on the players' characters, the rest of the world keeps moving. Let your world be dynamic. Create a simple, observable set of actions and goals for Storyteller characters and have those change and impact the world outside of the active session.

This may mean that an informant is simply gone when the players' characters return to them, snatched up by the quarry. The quarry's last known redoubt might be abandoned if the players' characters wait too long to infiltrate. This risk-reward element is critical in a game like **Hunter** where the power imbalance is tilted against the players' characters. Time is a precious commodity for the cell, and the Hunters' world doesn't have infinite patience for them to act on it.

However, don't use a dynamic world to "gotcha" the players. The goal is to make the world feel vital, logical, and changing, not like a repeatedly stacked deck. Just as players should avoid out-of-game knowledge in their characters' decision-making, the Storyteller wants to strive for the same partition of knowledge.

Which isn't to say that there shouldn't be consequences for actions. Quite the opposite — consequences are at the core of the World of Darkness. Players should be able to read the game's signs and feedback to understand the cause and effect of what has happened. Unjustifiably snatching a victory from the players can ruin their enjoyment of a story or even an entire chronicle. Don't lord the Storyteller's power over the players; they should understand the challenges before them and trust both you and the game systems.

Breathing Room

A Storyteller will never be able to plan every possible path the story will go, and they shouldn't. Dice, player investment, an exciting moment of roleplaying — any of this can steer a story into unexpected territory. It's important to remember that the players don't know what comes next in a story. This gives a Storyteller a significant degree of freedom to introduce the next scene, but also to extend or adjust a scene so that it furthers the story and keeps the players engaged. This is part of the Storyteller's craft, recognizing an opportunity to make the player choices meaningful, but also maintain scene momentum.

If the unexpected turn catches you off guard in the moment, call for a break to think where to go next. The Storyteller's role requires the most continuity of the troupe, contributing critical information to every scene often with few quiet moments to ponder. The players will understand if you need a moment and everyone will enjoy the game more if you don't feel like you're making arbitrary or ill-considered decisions. ■

Chapter Six:

SUPERNATURAL THREATS

Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful.
— Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Hereafter we present a wide variety of antagonists around whom interesting Hunter stories can be told. You find some unique twists on familiar archetypes herein, but also a variety of nighttime strangenesses that don't fit any classic category. The onus is on the Hunters to do their research and preparation, therefore, to make the world a safer and hopefully better place.

Storytellers, this chapter includes a wide variety of presentations, the better to let you find your troupe's groove. Some of these antagonists have a great deal of detail, allowing you to run them as written. Others leave key elements vague, the better for you to either fill in details on the fly or design your own details into the lacunae. Feel free to change any of the details present to suit your chronicle. For example, if you want to use the vampire cult herein but don't want to set your stories in the Philippines, no problem! You know your troupe better than we could.

Antagonist Formats

Just like with scenes, the Storyteller can zoom in and out on the mechanical details of antagonists and other supporting characters At their simplest, foes need only a description and a difficulty level, for example: Ghoul 3. This makes defeating this antagonist a Difficulty 3 roll with the appropriate ability. In a conflict, falling short of this difficulty can cause damage.

EXAMPLE:

Erika goes up against the aforementioned ghoul, but gets only one success on a Strength + Brawl roll. She suffers two points of damage (perhaps +1 or more if the ghoul is armed) and the thug remains a threat.

In most cases, antagonists have pools for key action categories and certain actions, as opposed to discrete Attribute or Skill values. It's probably not important what a monster's Driving Skill value is, but if the vampire has a Driving (Evasive Maneuvers) pool listed, that's something they're particularly adept at doing.

General Difficulties: The General Difficulty values given for each Antagonist let the Storyteller add a bit more nuance while still remaining streamlined. The number before the slash represents the Difficulty to defeat their strongest ability, the number after the slash the Difficulty to overcome them in other tests.

Antagonist Options: If you need to roll a pool for an antagonist, roll twice the Difficulty, but note that this is rarely necessary (since twice the Difficulty as a pool will likely just equal the Difficulty value anyway). You can also, as an option, roll a single die every time the antagonist's Difficulty comes into play, and on a 0 they are considered to have rolled a critical, adding +2 to their Difficulty for that test.

Tools of Terror and Flaws of the Foe

While each monster brings a unique set of abilities to the table, many of their specific traits exist in various forms on multiple supernatural creature types. Below are rules for some of the more common powers and weaknesses. Note that the manifestation of these traits can vary wildly, and this list focuses solely on their interpretation according to the Hunter: The Reckoning game rules. Presentation is everything: Storytellers should add flavor and details in accordance with the nature of the quarry, and they're encouraged to tweak them or come up with completely new variants as they see fit.

Monster Abilities

Unless otherwise stated, each power comes at the cost of a single Willpower (if the Storyteller bothers to track it) and only a single power can be used each turn. Powers labelled Persistent are exempt from this rule and are always active. For dice pools either use the one stated or consider it equal to twice the Danger (or use flat Danger as a Difficulty).

Charm (X pool): The creature enthralls its victim, evoking something akin to infatuation and adoration in its victims. Anyone failing to resist the power with their Composure + Resolve are enthralled for the rest of the scene. Enthralled victims automatically fail social tests against the creature and must spend a Willpower point each time they want to act against it. This power usually affects anyone in sight of the creature when used, though for "lesser" versions, the monster may need to choose a single affected victim, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Command (X pool): The creature can force a victim to perform involuntary acts, commandeering their actions like they would a puppet. Failing to resist the power with their Intelligence + Resolve compels the victim to obey a single verbal command by the creature. The Storyteller is encouraged to adjust the effect depending on the margin: The creature might need a margin of two to enforce a longer action or series of actions, with mental intrusions ("Forget you saw me!") requiring four or more. Some creatures such as many vampires depend on eye contact for this ability to work, but it is far from a universal rule, especially when other, stranger creatures are involved.

Invisibility: Whether by bending light or convincing the brain of its victims to ignore it, the creature is able to make themselves effectively invisible. Any attempt to detect them is done at +3 Difficulty, should the Storyteller even allow it. Unless otherwise stated, the invisibility cannot hide overt interaction or violent acts such as direct attacks, and any such action immediately renders the creature visible.

Onslaught: Persistent. When making melee or brawl attacks, the creature can target all enemies within reach simultaneously. The creature makes a single roll, with each target making their own defense roll.

Prescience (X pool): The creature can extract information from unprotected minds, by reading the strands of fate, or even seemingly out of thin air, detecting ambushes, lies, and even thoughts from the unwary. Anyone who tries to deceive the creature must succeed at a Composure + Wits test vs the Prescience pool. If the creature scores a high enough margin it can pluck information out of the victim (such as brief flashes of the cell's safe house), and four or more successes allows it to read surface thoughts.

Regenerate (X Health): Persistent. The creature heals or mends a set number of Health levels per turn. Superficial damage is regained first, followed by aggravated damage. Damage inflicted from Vulnerability sources (see below) cannot be regenerated by this ability.

Resilience: Persistent. The creature treats all damage as superficial damage unless it belongs to one of its Vulnerabilities (see below).

Rush: Able to move in blinding bursts of speed, the monster is able to close the gap with an enemy or vanish in the blink of an eye. If used while the monster is out of melee range but still proximate in the scene, the ability instantly allows the creature to attack a victim in close combat, as if engaged at the beginning of the turn. It can also be used to break off combat, letting the creature escape on foot and gain a turn's worth of head start, unless trapped or cornered.

Shapeshift (Animal): The creature can take the shape of any animal listed in its ability. The change takes a full turn to perform, during which they can only dodge attacks. In some cases clothing and equipment is part of the change, but that's on a case-by-case basis.

Terrify (X pool): The creature can instill a primal fear in its victims and enemies and is able to make even the most grizzled hunter shake with fright. Anyone failing to resist the power with their Composure + Resolve are terrified for the rest of the scene. Terrified victims must spend a point of Willpower to master their fear, otherwise any actions taken in the creature's presence suffer a two-dice penalty. This power usually affects anyone in sight of the creature when used, but as with charm, might affect a single victim for "lesser" monsters.

Monster Weaknesses

Similarly to the powers above, many monsters have weaknesses to certain things, such as most vampires being burned by sunlight or werewolves suffering grievous harm from silver. Below are some weaknesses that Hunters can discover and exploit when facing their quarry.

Bound: The creature is unable to move further than a specified distance from an object or person (specified in ability). If forcibly moved out of this area, the creature must make every effort to return there, suffering a level of Aggravated Health damage per turn until they are back.

Powerless: Subjects of the type specified are immune to any supernatural abilities of the creature. The creature is still able to take normal actions against them, though.

Repelled: The creature is unable to move within arm's length of a specified place or substance. If forcibly moved into this area the creature must make every effort to retreat, suffering a level of Aggravated Health damage per turn until they have withdrawn.

Vulnerability: Damage from the specified source is treated as Aggravated, even if the creature is Resilient, and the damage cannot be Regenerated. If the trait has a value, the creature suffers this many levels of Aggravated Health damage per turn by simply being in contact with the source of the Vulnerability.

Weak Spot: By attacking a certain part of the creature (sometimes with a certain weapon, such as wooden stakes to the heart in the case of many vampires) the creature can be severely hurt or otherwise incapacitated. Hitting a weak spot requires the spot to be known and the attack made as a called shot with a +2 Difficulty modifier, but the damage is considered Aggravated unless otherwise specified, following the rules for *Vulnerability* above.

Vampires

As deceptive as they are diverse, vampires come in a bewildering variety, and many Hunters have met their end believing they understood the limits of their undead foe. Nevertheless, most vampires do share a number of characteristics:

Bite: Vampires can perform a bite attack against a grappled opponent. The bite deals two levels of Aggravated Health damage regardless of margin and a flat one Aggravated Health damage each turn thereafter if they continue feeding. Struggling free once bitten requires the expenditure of a Willpower point, as the victim yields to the seductive effect of the vampire's feeding.

Resilient: The dead flesh of a vampire doesn't bleed and isn't easily damaged.

Vulnerability (Fire): Fire burns a vampire as it would a mortal.

Vulnerability (Sunlight 2): The bane of the undead, direct sunlight burns them like fire.

Weak Spot (Heart with Wooden Stake): The stake in itself does only superficial damage (+0), but a margin of five or more impales the heart, paralyzing the vampire. If the vampire is immobilized, this can be attempted as an extended test.

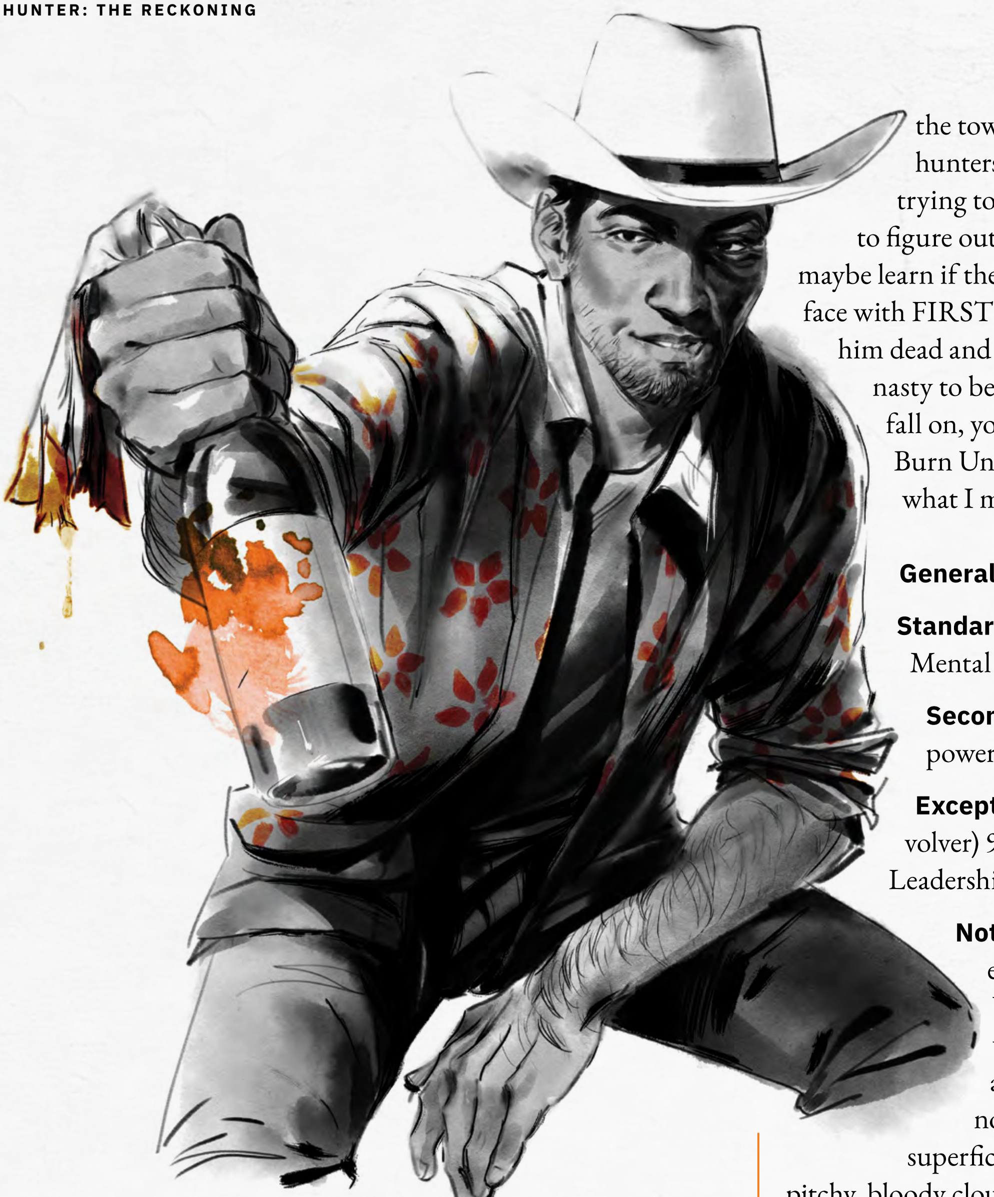
Efraín, Luminous Vampire

Have you heard of this untouchable blankbody hiding up in northern Mexico? Real scumbag's been handed control over human trafficking operations across the northeastern border, with most of his victims coming right out of the nest he built for himself in Nuevo León. They say he draws them with the promise of employment in shell corporations that vanish overnight, only for their workforce to show up as vampire pets months later. Really sick stuff.

Anyway, this guy has Hunter cells across the globe scratching their heads in confusion, apparently. They're calling him the "luminous one," or maybe he calls himself that, who knows. Basically, they believe him to be something new, or at least something the blankbodies have managed to keep from us until now. They don't know if it's just him or if there's more of him out there, and the second possibility scares them shitless. He's not like other leeches, you see, even though he works with them. Supposedly, he's in bed with the Establishment vees now, getting real cozy with them, but not too long ago he danced to the Blood Cult's tune, and he was really good at it.

Thing is, this guy won't burn with fire. And I don't mean he burns slowly either, he just doesn't burn. At all.

Three cells have gone against him, two down in Tlaxcala, where he had some type of rancho, and one in the rural surroundings of Monterrey, up northeast of the coun-



try. Only three Hunters made it back out of 13. Those who could talk through the pain of burn treatment all said the same thing: He can become fire, or something that looks and feels a hell of a lot like it. Some described it more as a smoldering cloud of ash, but the idea remains the same; he'll burn you pretty badly just by getting close. And yes, he's still a blankbody. Dead as they come, hungry for blood (though this one might like it cooked), and the heat only shows up in IR scanners when he changes into the fire cloud thing, seemingly from nowhere. Real fucking weird.

He goes by Efraín Barrera now, last seen shacking up on the hills of Villaldama, in Nuevo León. Small town full of nice people, delicious bread, and blooming mesquite trees; probably bad for the allergies. They say he has everyone there in his pocket, and with the Establishment on his side, it's probably more than just the town. Word is the fed-backed monster hunters in Mexico, the DAAE, have been trying to grab him in one piece for study, to figure out what makes him tick and all that, maybe learn if there's more like him and gain some face with FIRSTLIGHT. But local Hunters just want him dead and gone for good. His business is too nasty to be left unchecked. Whichever side you fall on, you probably want to watch him first. Burn Unit's getting real crowded, if you know what I mean.

General Difficulty: 5/ 4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 8, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms (Revolver) 9, Persuasion (Contagious Passion) 9, Leadership (Bravado) 9

Notes/ Other Traits: Efraín possesses the listed vampire traits, except Vulnerability to fire. Incendiary weapons are ineffective on him (or at least, no more effective than a normal weapon would be, dealing superficial damage only). He can exhale a pitchy, bloody cloud of flame immediately in front of him. (Treat as a ranged attack at +0 damage with a pool equal to 2 x Danger that hits everyone he's facing within three meters.) In addition to this, he can become a roiling cloud of flaming mist, an ability he can use offensively to immolate hostiles by enveloping them, as well as defensively to prevent most forms of physical damage. Anyone enveloped sustains two levels of Aggravated Health damage per turn spent in the cloud. He can also Shapeshift into a coyote, an ability he uses for spying and reconnaissance.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Wielding strange powers and eschewing the blankbodies' traditional aversion to fire, Efraín has managed to become a powerful local player in their occult hierarchies, rising in rank and power at a fast pace. He wants to continue this ascent, keeping a firm hold on the seat he's managed to obtain, all while searching for allies for an oncoming conflict that he's certain looms in the horizon.

- Efraín is paranoid of other vampires, especially those from the Establishment, since he's convinced they want to end him like they did his ancestors. This often results in tense dealings with them, and bloody territorial disputes that he has so far managed to resolve without provoking an all-out war, but the old guard isn't happy with his presence.
- Ultimately, Efraín wants to gain enough power and influence to resurrect his bloodline and reclaim the Mexican territory from those he deems as invaders. He still has a long way to go before he's able to dethrone the Establishment, however, so in the meantime he plays nice with them, following their rules and rituals as much as possible to avoid getting on their wrong side, just as he did with others before them.

Appearance: At first glance, Efraín looks like a youthful and healthy man in his early twenties, with medium-brown skin, dark hair and eyes, and prominent cheekbones that give him an air of unyielding dignity. But closer inspection reveals his undead nature, looking gray and sickly around the eyes and lips, markers that worsen and become more apparent the longer he goes without feeding. He's never seen without a cowboy hat on, and the rest of his dress usually includes patterned shirts unbuttoned down to the chest, large belt buckles, and sharp-pointed snakeskin boots.

In Stories

Efraín is a powerful individual with many resources available to him. He has the potential to be a dangerous enemy or an uneasy ally to the Hunters.

Due to suspicions against others of his kind, he's almost always surrounded by a personal guard made of Sicario ghouls armed to the teeth, and he has extended his influence enough to have the support of drug cartels and other paramilitary groups. While he's as much of a predator as other vampires, he has built an unlife for himself where he rarely goes hungry, and will only really set out to attack someone if they threaten him or any of his endeavors directly. He can be particularly brutal when this happens, always showing outsized force and making it a point to leave someone barely alive to send a message.

Even though outwardly he works for them and follows their hierarchy, Efraín despises "the Establishment" and will do everything he can to see them cast down from their thrones, including helping Hunters directly or indirectly, as the situation allows. Some local Hunter cells have been tempted to join Efraín's side out of fear, but most of them outright refuse to even look in his direction, deeming him too dangerous a threat to take by Hunters alone.

In conversation, Efraín comes across as genial, someone living a simple life and just doing what he can to fight for the little guy. He's passionate about his goals and actually believes his own rhetoric, conveying and justifying his actions as necessary and ultimately more humane than the alternatives. (Think of this perspective as akin to the Hunters' Drives. His beliefs are what justifies his violent responses to every threat.) This charisma has afforded him many of the alliances that he has, as well as kept him consistently on the good side of those in power.

Encountering Efraín

- While investigating another threat in a museum, an antique collector's house, or another place where an archeological artifact can be found; the Hunters find an ancient codex detailing the existence of Efraín's kind, the "luminous ones" (tlahuelpuchi in Nahuatl). Efraín has been looking for the codex, intent on learning more about his lineage, and his search might now lead him to cross paths with the Hunters.
- Alternatively, the Hunters can try to decipher the codex and follow its clues, which will take them to the state of Tlaxcala in Mexico, where locals can identify Efraín as one of the creatures described in it.
- The Hunters face Efraín's ghouls while attempting to put a stop to one of the branches of his human trafficking operation in Tlaxcala. They can attempt

to go up the chain of command until they eventually reach him, in which case he'll oppose them every step of the way, alerting other vampires and Hunter groups to their endeavors. Otherwise, once he's aware of their efforts, Efraín might approach them later himself if he deems them useful for his goals against the Establishment.

- A local contact can point to Efraín directly as a possible ally if Hunters are looking to go against a particularly powerful member of the Establishment. Of course, Efraín doesn't trust easily, and his help won't come for free. He might send them on an errand first, watching for betrayal, and turn into a bitter foe instead at the slightest indication of it.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- Efraín is a difficult target to pin down alone. He'll almost always be within shouting distance of one or more of his blood-addicted minions and armed security. (Treat security guards as having General Difficulty of 3/ 2.) In addition, while not invulnerable to fire like him, most of his ghouls are at least somewhat resistant to it.
- Some local Hunter cells have joined Efraín's side. He has managed to convince them he's too dangerous as an enemy and too valuable as an asset to dethrone the "bigger threat" of the Establishment. Depending on the circumstances, these compromised Hunters might even oppose other Hunters who go against him.

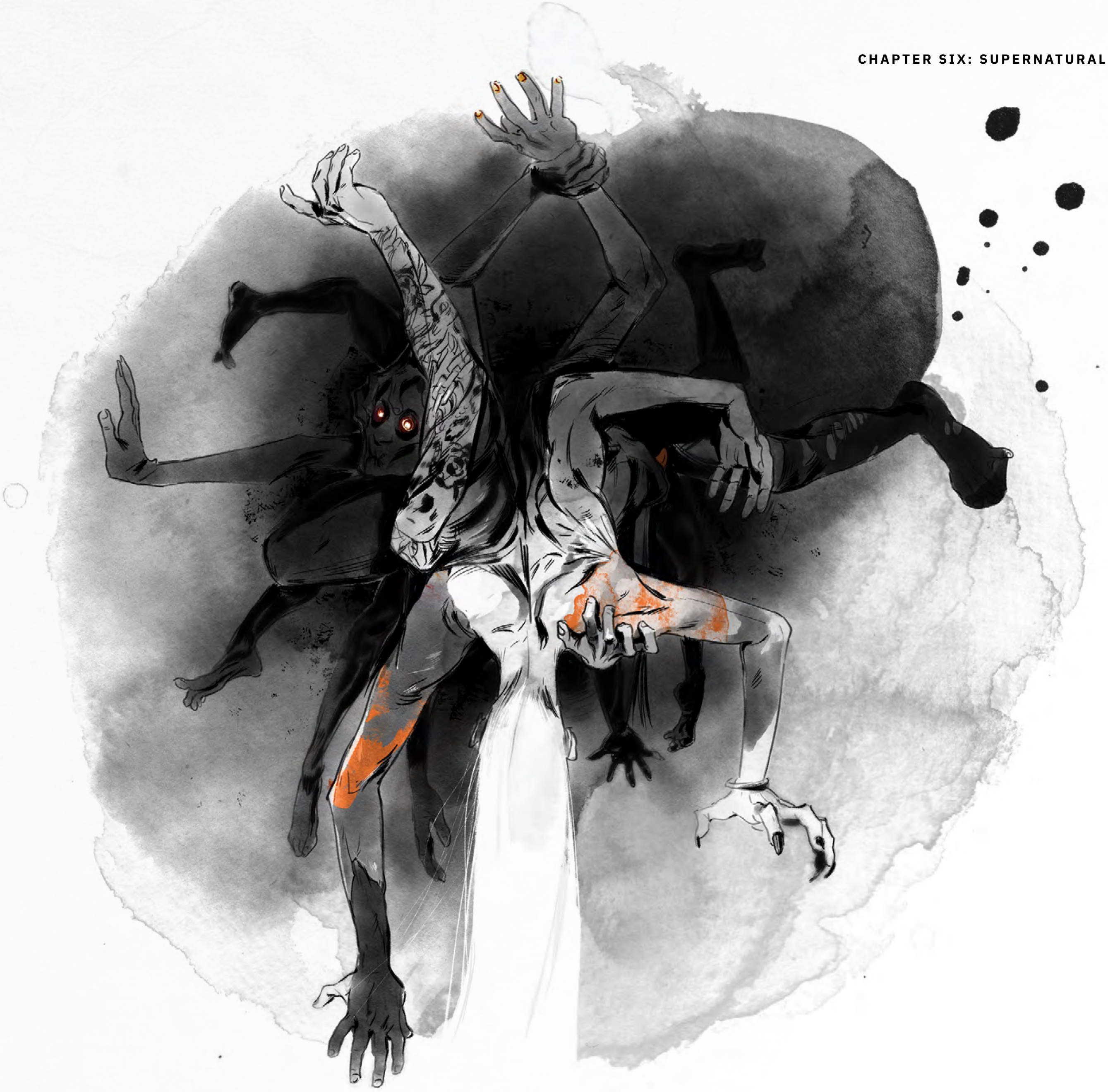
La Celestina, the Bloody Mannequin

Anyone who has ever visited Mexico City has been cautioned against wandering in the Colonia Roma district after midnight. Sure, tourists hear the same thing about many of the barrios there, and to the uninitiated, it's hard to imagine why the quiet streets of La Roma deserve such caution. It's enticing to revel in the historic neighborhood's apparent peace and solitude. But all it takes is to walk in its vicinity late at night, and you'll feel it. The chill. The locals will shake their heads, immediately identifying you as a clueless foreigner if they hadn't already. Go around it, they'll tell you; just stay away. If you see someone standing there alone in the middle of the night, por el amor de Dios, don't look away. Walk backward if you have to.

Nine times out of 10, people ignore these warnings without consequence, making them seem like baseless superstition or a way to mess with tourists. And nine times out of 10, they might be just that — especially the second one. But they're not unfounded. Something has been hunting there for decades, appearing periodically over the years to cause string after string of brutal murders in the area, always leaving victims without their blood, but always with one or more missing body parts. It usually haunts the place for a few months before fading into obscurity again, and no one really knows why.

Witness reports in these periods of violence are always the same: They describe the silhouette of a woman in the middle of the night, standing eerily still and in some cases, crying, singing, or just calling out for anyone that will hear it. Very few have seen it up close, but multiple accounts specifically call out its unnaturally pale complexion. The thing also apparently has a penchant for wearing pretty dresses, and if the testimonies are any indication, it never wears the same thing twice. Interestingly enough, the first sighting that focused on its clothing dates back to the 1960s, describing it as "the latest Parisian fashion." Who would've thought?

This thing is so efficient at what it does that almost no one has seen it actually move, at least no one who has lived to describe it. Some of the local urban legends have a victim running away, only to look back and find the creature has moved closer. Its living mannequin schtick has earned it its colloquial name "La Celestina," referencing an old local boutique famous not for its fashion but for its lifelike hand-carved mannequins, which burned down many decades ago. It can't be a literal mannequin, can it?



General Difficulty: 5/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 9, Social 3, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Subterfuge (Mimic human form or speech only, see notes below) 9, Athletics (Climb sheer surfaces) 8, Awareness (Find isolated prey) 8

Notes / Other Traits: Despite normally moving with its body parallel to the ground, La Celestina can stand upright (or upside-down, depending how you look at it), pressing, twisting, and locking its mass of limbs in place to assume a convincing human shape — most commonly a feminine one. This mimetic trick works better in the dark, when victims can see its silhouette, and the creature will often wrap itself in long garments to conceal its nature more easily (surprisingly, showing a consistent preference for high-fashion and designer clothing). No matter how good this guise is, however, La Celestina must stand still to maintain it, as any movement quickly reveals it to be something monstrous. It can also mimic human speech, limited to simple sentences but used to great effect to lure victims toward it. In combat it will attack with a flurry of limbs — raking, tearing, and scratching — treated as brawl attacks at +2 damage. It can also grapple its victim to perform a blood-sucking bite. (See general vampire rules.) Non-critical wins do no damage to La Celestina, but any such attack that would normally deal at least two levels of Aggravated damage will sever one of its limbs, reducing its Physical pool (and related Special Pools) by one die until the part can be replaced. La Celestina can lose a number of parts equal to Danger before her original body is exposed and it gains *Weak Spot* (Original Body). If outnumbered, La Celestina will always try to flee, including up along a wall if that's the most effective route, and it will face superior numbers only if cornered. La Celestina also has all the listed vampire traits.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- La Celestina is a blood-drinker resembling a many-limbed mannequin, compelled to collect human organs and parts to maintain its body, as well as to assist in what it believes is the process to create more like itself. It doesn't know who created it, or even have much of a sense of self, but if it can be coaxed into describing its experiences, it considers itself unfinished, compelled to take not just blood but other parts of its victims' corpus.
- Guided by a set of directives and basic needs, La Celestina primarily operates following the instinct to fulfill them, but it is by no means naive. The last few decades have molded it into a predator capable of assuming different human shapes and poses, going so far as to mimic speech and sounds like singing or crying to draw the attention of its prey. Once a victim wanders too close or turns its back to it, La Celestina twists and unfolds its many-limbed body to either strike immediately or give chase.
- Driven by a sense of longing for companionship instilled by its maker, the vampire's ultimate goal is to create another one like it, but it doesn't quite know how. Thus, it continues to pursue this task endlessly, harvesting and preparing what it deems to be the perfect body for its "child" and falling dormant upon completion, only to reawaken years later to discard the rotten tableau and begin the process anew.
- Appearance: La Celestina has transformed itself over the years into a more efficient predator, becoming a patchwork of body parts with varying skin tones and textures. Its original body can still be seen at the center, contrasting with the rest in its pale marblelike complexion. Multiple arms and legs allow it to crawl at great speed like an insect, and it currently possesses a total of three heads: one where a normal human head would be, and two others located toward the bottom of its original torso, fused at the end of smaller pedipalp-like appendages. The double heads are actually the creature's sensory organs; it moves in the direction they face, treating it as its "front", whipping the heads around frantically for increased awareness. The original head is more vestigial than anything. Its eyes are clouded with cataracts and its hair is stringy and dull, but it's still used primarily as the "face" whenever it assumes its human guise (see below).

In Stories

La Celestina is an instinct-driven creature with little regard for logic or emotion. While clearly a flawed creation, it is extremely efficient at doing what it was created to do. Its single-mindedness can be as much a flaw as it is a strength, as it will often disregard its own safety to complete a task, so long as it deems it sufficiently important. That being said, it is very adaptable and no stranger to Hunters, and will more often than not avoid confrontation with anything except obvious prey.

The connection between the old Casa Celestina boutique and the eponymous monster goes deeper than most people realize. Hunters who investigate the history of the place can learn of an incident that has been all but buried: the lynching of Federico Camacho over 70 years back. Camacho was the artist behind the boutique's lifelike mannequins, and later in his life began killing people in patterns that match La Celestina's own. He used the remains of his victims to build more "realistic" creations, even going so far as to display some of them in the boutique, wearing the latest fashions. He got away with this for years, with customers being none the wiser. But after one of the mannequins' faces was recognized, a group of local workers killed him and burned the place down before authorities could get there. Owing to the Colonia Roma's rise as an aristocratic district back then, this grim event was covered up in an attempt to keep the area's prestige.

What's unclear is what Camacho actually was. Accounts of him don't indicate that he was himself a vampire — so did he make one, somehow? Or was Camacho acting at the behest of something more nefarious that itself possessed the ability to bestow the vampiric state upon unfortunates? And even if that were true, why construct one, instead of working the turning upon an already-whole individual?

La Celestina either doesn't know or can't remember. Between one hunting cycle and the other, it hibernates in a subterranean lair beneath the ruined Casa Celestina, Camacho's old sanctuary and storage facility. Few things can stop it in its tracks, but the likeness of Camacho, be it in voice or appearance, will do the trick, at least until the creature recognizes it for a falsehood.

Hunters may also discover La Celestina's goal of creating another vampire, delving into its anguished efforts to bestow false life to its numerous failed creations. Success would finally fulfill La Celestina's purpose, releasing it from the burden of existence, while risking the creation of another possible threat.

Encountering La Celestina

- La Celestina's most recent hunting spree has been the longest one yet, and locals are worried it won't end this time. Authorities have attributed the murders to street violence, with none of the investigations digging deeper than that. The Hunters, however, learn that multiple witnesses claim to have seen La Celestina's silhouette in streets and alleys around the time of the murders, and residents attest to having observed a similar presence near their windows at night.
- While exploring the subway tunnels of Mexico City, the Hunters encounter a rotting stench and the sound of rats scampering. Illuminating the shadows, they find La Celestina's latest tableau, and their presence awakens the "vampire" from some shuddersome hibernation state. It briefly resists them violently, but then collapses in a pile of gory failure.
- An old woman named Raquel, who was one of the members of the mob that killed Camacho, is still alive in the area. She went on to become a Hunter, and has faced La Celestina multiple times through the decades. But now that she's old and frail, the vampire is out to kill her to prevent her from interfering again. When the Hunters are called to meet her, it's too late. Parts of Raquel have been taken, but her notes and leads remain for the Hunters to follow.
- Once La Celestina realizes it's being hunted, it will do everything it can to trick the Hunters into vulnerable locations, using victims as bait and mimicking the sound of other Hunters to disorient them. Its ultimate goal will be to lead them underground, where it can strike in the darkness and generally use the place to its advantage.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- La Celestina's lair (previously Camacho's) is located deep underground beneath the old Casa Celestina building. Heavy construction and gentrification of the area throughout the years have sealed its ground access, but the place can still be found by traveling through the nearby subway station tunnels. Hunters who delve into this space risk triggering the booby traps with which Camacho had protected the vile workshop.

Mga Hari ng Ilog ni Magwayen

Translation Note: the name of these Antagonists means "The Kings of Magwayen's River" in Tagalog. Throughout the document, they will be called "the Hari", as the word "hari" can be both singular and plural as needed.

Before the Spanish took over the Philippine archipelago, leaders and shamans believed that marrying spirits of the land gave them power. It was common practice for an authority figure, such as the local *datu*[1] or the *babaylan* of the polity, to have a mortal spouse to

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[1] There is no direct contextual translation for this word. Perhaps the closest explanation is that datu were the political leaders of a polity in pre-Colonial times. They weren't kings, per se, nor were they anywhere similar to presidents or prime ministers. They were the "big men" who everyone relied on for protection and leadership. Common folk would pay them tribute in the form of labor and material goods.

continue their bloodline, and to name themselves as the lover of a spiritual patron. The marriages were grabs for social and political influence just as much as they were a means of worship: The pre-Colonial Filipino believed that the best way to appease the land and take part in its bounty was to offer themselves as sacrifices. It was also understood that the union between human and spirit had no tangible product in the form of offspring.

As with all things colonizer, things got shaky once Christianity and conquest entered the picture. Spanish exorcists could not reconcile the idea that a marriage, even if it was one between an otherworldly force and a mortal, would have not produced children. Surely the sons and daughters from these bloodlines possessed some sort of power, or were at least nominally favored by the spiritual patron of their family? One particular priest, Padre Alejandro Raura, made it his life's work to test this theory.

Many a grisly experiment took place by Padre Raura's hand, all under the guise of a holy inquisition. What Raura's peers were unaware of was the fact that Raura was a Spanish vampire who had established a lair in the Philippines. Raura's experiments were a way for him to consolidate power over his mortal flock, and also a means for him to have a steady supply of human blood to sustain himself. He convinced his human minions that the flesh of spirit children was imbued with power, and the only way to take that power for one's self was to cannibalize them.

Thus, the Hari ng Ilog ni Magwayen — the Hari — were born, although back then they were known by another, far more Spanish name. Raura's influence became a cult following among the *illustrados*, the powerful local clergy, and the Spanish elite on the archipelago. While the humans hunted down and kidnapped people with "the blood" for their next meal, the vampires stole away the most desirable ones among the picking to glut themselves as they pleased. Occasionally, these morsels proved to be interesting (or worthy) enough to be turned into vampires themselves, thus growing Raura's cabal in the country.

The Katipunan Revolution and the Philippines gaining its independence from Spain posed a notable threat to the Hari but did not stamp them out. Raura and his minions merely moved their operations further underground and hid behind the financial shields provided by the rich patrons they had under their thrall. Of course, playing nice with the Americans only helped them further, and was the main reason why the cult survived World War II.

At present, the Hari's cannibals have taken on a life of their own away from their vampiric masters. The practice of eating spirit children tends to be a family affair, as members of the cult indoctrinate their loved ones, and seek out like-minded folk within their social strata to marry as a means of protecting the power they devoured for themselves. Most of these cannibals aren't even aware of the fact that their cult started because of vampires, much less know that vampires exist. There are whispers among the upper echelons about a biannual Selection, which the vampire Hari arranges for in order to feast and to see if there are viable mortals to Embrace.

Raura's fate is unknown. It is likely that the old vampire was either killed years ago (or immolated himself in sunlight during a fugue) or is sleeping the strange, timeless sleep of the undead. His successors are happy to lead the cult for themselves.

NOTABLE CULTISTS:

- Wesley Essex-Guanzon, "Ang Dakilang Hari," is the human head of the cult. He is aware of the vampiric masters of the Hari and seeks to become one.
- Kaitlin Fajardo, human enforcer. Spearheads most of the kidnapping operations and takes pride in providing chattel for the cult. Unaware of the true history of the Hari, including the fact that vampires are real.
- Pancho Santa Maria, a business tycoon by day and avid cult member by night. Provides venues for cult gatherings in buildings he owns.
- Marissa Inojosa, the alpha vampire in the cabal. The oldest in the lot, ruling over the rest with an iron fist. Claims that the vampire who made her was one of Raura's original lieutenants. Wesley's current lover.
- Lorenzo Reyes, Marissa's top hunter. Cleans up issues for the Hari, including unruly human members.
- Richard Tupaz, a vampire Hari. Sycophantic toward Marissa's face, but schemes to overthrow her as the new head of the cabal.

Example Vampire Hari

General Difficulty: 5/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical: 6, Social 7, Mental 8

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 8, Stealth 8, Occult 9

Notes/ Other Traits: The stats represent one of the vampiric heads of the cult. It follows the common rules for vampires (p. 169) and also possesses Command 8, Prescience 8, and the ability to rip the blood out of a body from a distance: Treat as a ranged attack at +2 Aggravated Health damage with a pool equal to twice the Danger. Each level of damage inflicted allows the Vampire Hari to restore one health level of any damage type to themselves.

Example Human Hari

General Difficulty: 3/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical: 3, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Larceny 6, Stealth 6, Medicine (Prepare Human Meal) 6

Notes / Other Traits: These stats represent a competent snatcher of the cult, responsible for the procurement of victims already identified by the scholars of the cult. Other members, such as low-ranking guards or vampire liaisons, will have exceptional dice pools relevant to their role. Human Hari usually work in groups with numbers equal to the current Danger value.

Hunter Hound

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical: 6, Social 3, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms (Sniper Rifle) 8, Stealth 7, Investigation (Track Hunter activity) [Danger]

Notes / Other Traits: These stats represent an ex-Hunter, broken into servitude of the cult (See Additional Dangers and Victims, below). They're wretched individuals, barely able to get along in society, but they retain their Hunter skills, now pressed into hunting a new quarry: other Hunters.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Keep the good times rolling. Human Hari really believe that the mortals they consume are the source of all their good fortune and vitality. Vampire Hari love the fact that their gig is still in operation. Both sides will fight tooth-and-nail to protect the cult.
- Some of the vampire Hari feel that Marissa has controlled the cult for too long, and relies over much on her unverified ties to Padre Alejandro Raura. They are willing to use human meat-shields and mortal minions to oust her.
- Some of the human Hari are catching on to the possibility that there is a cult within their cult, and that those secret ones hold the true power. This faction wants to uncover this secret group, and either join them or dethrone them. They aren't aware that they're dealing with vampires, however.

Appearance: No member of the Hari is average. Raura and his vampiric cabal have always preferred to take the brightest, most beautiful stars among their human thralls, a practice his contemporaries see fit to continue. The human members of the cult come from the elite echelons of human society, and often have generations of money at their disposal. Whatever physical defects or pre-existing conditions they have as a result of strange marriages or the practice of cannibalism themselves is always swept away by expensive plastic surgery. Money also buys great food, comfortable air-conditioned homes, and access to luxurious fitness facilities.

In Stories

So far, Hunters who have a run-in with the Hari haven't survived to tell the tale. The cult handles all threats to its survival with impunity, and has little love for Hunters. Its members are the sort who would pull all the stops and relentlessly pursue any person who could be a potential threat before trouble starts.

That said, the cult has been drunk on its own power for decades now, and the general majority of their members can get careless. The proliferation of social media platforms and the ease of access that all Filipinos across the board have to them means that there are far more eyes and ears on the fringes of society than monsters of the World of Darkness would be comfortable with. It is not unheard of for Hunters to turn up rumors or strange accounts on Facebook, Reddit, or Twitter about a new freaky cult operating on the outskirts of the metropolis. Inevitably, a younger member of the cult will get reckless enough to out themselves in small ways, as well, if it hasn't happened already.

Finally, there are the internal tensions between the Hari to consider. Hunters can either take advantage of that to shut some cult operations down (as the cult may be too big of an entity for a single cell to handle), or may find themselves caught in the middle of a larger power game that they won't always see in its entirety. At least not until it's too late.

Overall, the Hari are the sort of antagonist best played out for an entire narrative arc or even whole chronicle. These antagonists are deeply rooted within the Philippines, and effectively an organization with many layers. Hunters can harm them, perhaps even significantly, but destroying them would require manpower and cooperation that individual cells likely don't have, especially in the short term.

Encountering the Hari

- After spending weeks preparing for the Hunt, the quarry the Hunters were intent on pursuing has disappeared without warning. Poking around has revealed that they were kidnapped by a notably competent crew, and the money trail leads back to a rich man in a private subdivision. He's known to host some wild parties, and the dark rumors around those are that bodies regularly turn up in the aftermath.
- For a more personal context, a Hunter may be targeted by the Hari, not because the Hari think they're a threat, but because the Hari believe that the Hunter is their next best meal. If a Hunter has "the blood," this cult will discover them soon enough.
- A medium with whom the Hunters have been consulting has gone missing. There are signs of a violent struggle in their home, and a frightening

amount of long-dried blood. There may or may not be a finger on the floor. The ghosts lingering around the area have an interesting story to tell about vampires should the Hunters have the time — and the means — to listen.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- The dark reality of Manila being a city that eats people is known to everyone, but every now and then somebody tenacious enough (or crazy enough) wants to do something about it. Hunters on the trail of the Hari may be able to form tenuous alliances with concerned individuals or even orgs who know that they can't take on a cult this size alone. However, there may be some natural (and potentially fatal) disagreements on how to handle the situation.
- The network that the cult has at its disposal is the kind that's so expansive that their own assets often operate to protect the interests of the Hari without knowing that they're doing it. The 1 percent in the Philippines, most especially the ones in Manila, come from a small and insular world that takes care of its own even if they happen to be human-eating religious freaks. From government officials to crooked cops to amoral journalists, a Hunter's life outside of the Hunt, together with anyone they love, may be threatened should the Hari perceive the Hunter to be too inquisitive.
- Occasionally, particularly cunning members of the cult kidnap Hunters who have tried to go after them, starve them, and break them into the practices of the Hari by feeding them nothing but spirit children remains. The "hounds" they create from this process are vicious things and are the cult's weapon of choice against Hunters who try to target them.

Werewolves

Primal terrors of fur, fangs, and claws, werewolves are some of the most dangerous creatures a Hunter can face in direct physical conflict. Thankfully, most werewolves that show up on Hunters' radar are outcasts and misfits, their prime distant in one direction or another. When in human or wolf form werewolves are no different from a normal member of either species, apart from their Shapeshift ability.

Shapeshift (Wolf): The werewolf can take the form of human, wolf, or half-wolf.

Vulnerability (Fire): Fire burns a werewolf as it would a human. The damage can be Regenerated, though.

Vulnerability (Silver 1): Silver is the bane of the werewolf, producing grievous wounds that linger. Simply touching the metal burns the hide of the beast.

When transforming into their monstrous half-wolf battle form they gain the following:

Claws and Fangs: The natural weapons of the werewolf are considered brawl weapons that inflict +2 Aggravated damage to Hunters.

Onslaught: Werewolves attack in a flurry of claws that spare no one within reach.

Regenerate (1): Werewolves heal most damage in a matter of seconds.

Resilience: Rampaging werewolves can shrug off most kinds of damage, except silver.

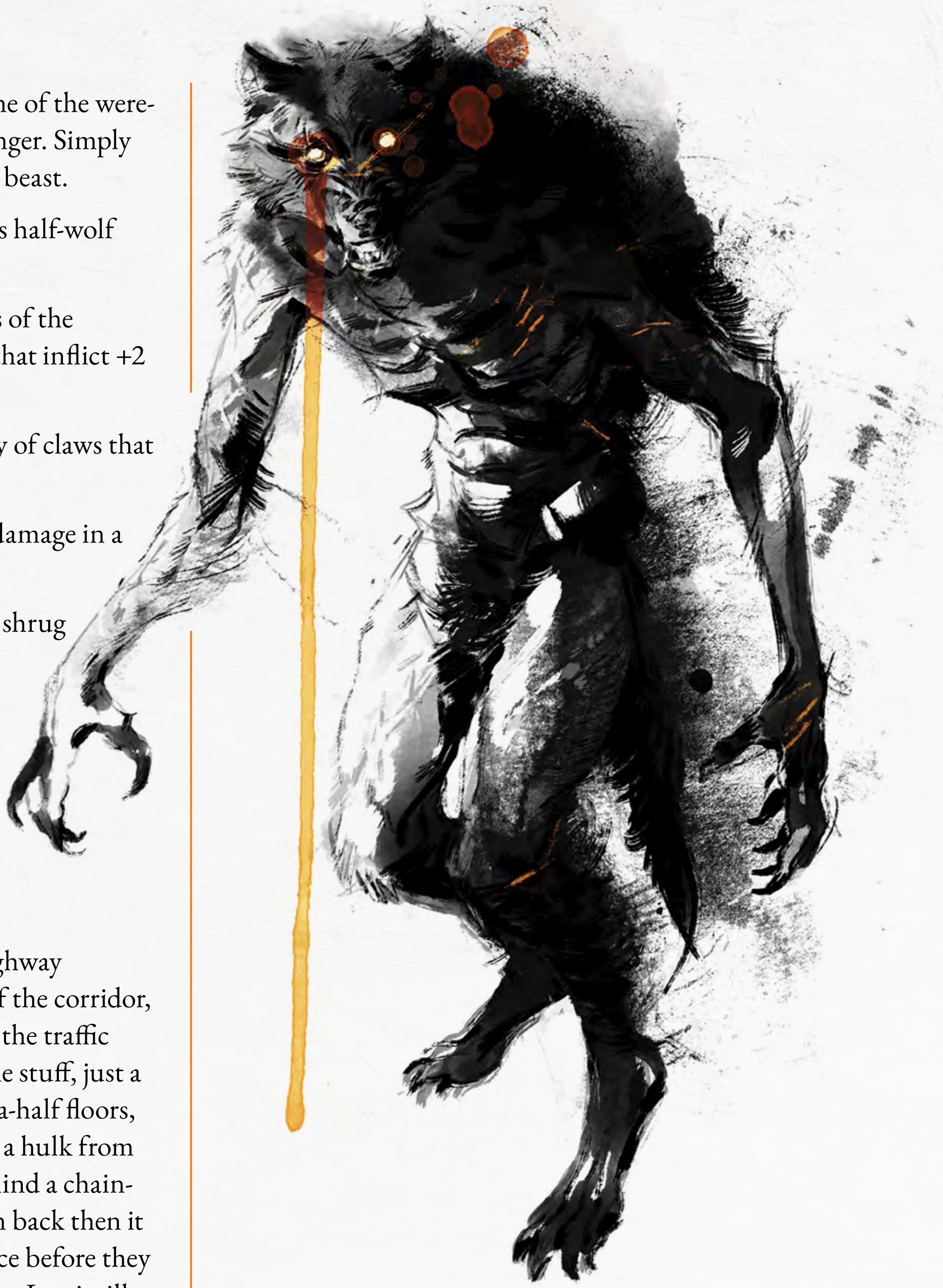
Terrify (8): Facing an enraged werewolf without being reduced to gibbering fear requires nerves of steel.

Splinterfang

Twenty years ago, maybe 30, over on Highway 121, before they developed the hell out of the corridor, there was an old slaughterhouse right off the traffic route. Looked like some real horror-movie stuff, just a big corrugated metal building, two-and-a-half floors, weather-stained and ominous, rising like a hulk from the scrub, set back from the highway behind a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Even back then it had been out of use forever, probably since before they even paved that early highway. Records for Lewisville, nearby, didn't go back far enough to show who owned the place, just a bad-dream memory that no one had taken the initiative to knock down. Must have been wildly dangerous inside, both from abandoned slaughterhouse equipment and neglect.

Oh, and one other thing:

It had been abandoned, but it hadn't fallen out of use, you could tell, just being near it in the Texas summer heat, because it stank like meat and blood left outside, well, in the Texas summer heat. And it would get worse, the more the summer wore on, like there was more inside of whatever had been putting off that stink. By the time fall and winter came around, the stink wasn't so bad until you were right up on the place, but you could see a kind of black crud, something spoiled and rotten, crawling up the sides of the building until the rain came and washed that muck off the sides. Didn't do much about the smell, though, all buttery-sweet and rancid, make you gag. All the fat off the kills going bad. An article buried on page 8 of the local freebie paper mentioned all the gore they found inside when they finally bulldozed it to make way for the overpass. Now all that remains of the original building is a rusty pyramid of corrugated sheeting, rebar framing, and a couple of rotted wooden staircases that climb up into nothing.



Truth of it is, place where it stood is a werewolf den. Hellish old beast, all broken-down now, used to chase down coyotes and pick off the drifters and day laborers making their way up 121. Wretched thing has to be near the end now, but is just plain too mean to die. Don't know how long a werewolf is supposed to live. He's still out there — is it a he? — even though the slaughterhouse is gone and the place is all subdivisions and tollgates. Part of it's a greenbelt, though, and there's thickets and trees in there where he hides. Hell, he's mostly folklore by this point, but every now and then the old hunger rouses him and somebody turns up dead. Parts of them turn up dead, that is. Cops won't go in after him. They heard there were some teenagers smoking weed and sent six cruisers to the county line after them. Kids' parents pay citations. Gotta assume werewolves don't.

General Difficulty: 6/ 2 : 3/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 10 : 4, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 10 : 6, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 12 : 6, Survival 6, Stealth 7

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Splinterfang mostly wants to be left alone at this point, and generally tries to protect his territory more than he actively seeks out human prey
- That said, every now and then, the old beast goes on a wild tear, tormented by memories of glory days and the feel of fresh blood on his muzzle
- Splinterfang resents the development nearby and how he has been forced to live in its shadow, and would gladly move on to a different territory, but the scabrous city has extended so far, the creature feels trapped by its asphalt encroachment

Appearance: In his wolf form, Splinterfang looks haggard, with a greasy, once-red coat mostly gone to gray. In his human form, Splinterfang is weatherbeaten, with eyes narrowed by decades of looking into the sun, and dresses like a custodian at the roadhouse that's been closed for years. In the wolf-man form, Splinterfang is gaunt, with ribs visible beneath patches of matted gray-red fur and keloid scars testifying to violence long past.

Notes/ Other Traits: Statistics above are for half-wolf and human form, respectively. Splinterfang has all the traits listed for werewolves, above. In addition he has Invisibility. This ability only works as long as Splinterfang remains in shadow and makes no movement at all, as if he were hiding under the dark of the moon.

In Stories

Splinterfang is fairly straightforward as werewolf antagonists go, but that doesn't mean he's easy to overcome. More than anything else, he feels cornered, and aside from his genuine rampages, attacks humans only if he feels he has no other option. Advanced age and the horrors of his life have taken a toll, however, so the threats he perceives aren't always actual threats.

Splinterfang most often remains in his wolf form, but on occasion, reliving past glories will inspire him to take the shape of a human, and he can be encountered lurking around the edges of shopping centers, beer gardens, and housing developments, half enticed by their offerings, half nurturing the malice he feels toward the intrusion of the all-consuming human world.

Splinterfang doesn't have a sophisticated agenda, but is easily provoked to violence by any number of situations he feels he's lost control of, whether wearing the wolf-shape or that of a man. A cell of Hunters is likely to learn of him in the wake of a seemingly random attack, such as a child missing from one of the housing subdivisions or a drunken weekend reveler "attacked by a big fucking coyote." The players' characters' first encounter with Splinterfang might be outside a bar, where a parking-lot brawl turns horrific, perhaps even before they suspect they're dealing with a werewolf.

Conversations with Splinterfang in human form are likely terse and threat-laden. He has an imperfect memory, and Splinterfang is often confused, and he may aggressively call them out in human form, referring to them by the names of other people he's had arguments with in the past. Splinterfang can be convinced of a number of courses of action, but he isn't long on trust, and may renege on a compromise out of fear that the

Hunters would have double-crossed him if he didn't outmaneuver them first. Such a development almost certainly manifests in violence, possibly against innocents.

Encountering Splinterfang

- Splinterfang suffers one of his violent fugues near an old motel off the highway and kills a vacationer just passing through the area. An individual with a description matching Splinterfang's human appearance was reported in the area by the motel manager and the two housekeepers. The Hunters either recognize the description from familiarity with Splinterfang's local legend, or make the connection through an information gathering service, like the newspaper records at the Lewisville library (or the library website).
- Splinterfang might understand that the players' characters have taken an interest in him and note what he can of their appearance and behavior. He knows they're stalking him, so he stalks them in kind, appearing at the periphery of one of the bars or grocery stores to gesture menacingly at them from afar. He's trying to get them to follow, where he'll use his ability to vanish from sight in order to ambush them, hopefully picking them off one by one.
- On a rainy night, the Hunters are in one of the few cars on the highway, and a hunched form in the road ahead of them suggests trouble. It's Splinterfang in his wolf form, worrying at a scrub-deer roadkill — and he stares into the Hunters' headlights before taking human form and dragging the deer off the highway and into the underbrush. Do they recognize him? Does he recognize them? Is he baiting them?
- Splinterfang is willing to allow Hunters to enter his den — which he's almost certainly watching from afar — and either ambush them as they emerge or use its shadowy interior to strike from darkness at advantage.
- Splinterfang doesn't have much left, and he knows it. He wants to go out taking as many enemies with him as he can. Over the course of a story, he'll attack and withdraw, attack and withdraw until he finally realizes that Hunters aren't going to give up, and then he'll try to draw them into a favorable location where he can make his last stand. If he's killed, Splinterfang revents to his wolf form as the light leaves his eyes.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- Splinterfang's lair, such as it is, is made up of torn, rusty metal detritus, what's left of the old slaughterhouse. Reckless Hunters might cut themselves if they're not careful (treat as a three-success knife attack) or even contract tetanus. The lair itself is heartbreaking and gruesome simultaneously, consisting of trinkets that have personal meaning to Splinterfang and the gnawed and browned bones from past kills.
- Steve Garcia, a local-history enthusiast from up the road, has been researching Splinterfang's legend from a number of feverish websites, and may prove to be a source of information or even an undisciplined ally. Most likely, though, Steve looks at Hunters with any amount of organization as interlopers trying to make a name for themselves, and will prove a dangerous wild card, setting store-bought bear traps around where he thinks the lair might be. (As Storyteller, decide if these traps have even been placed in the right location, or if they're part of the investigation ruling out possible werewolf lairs.)

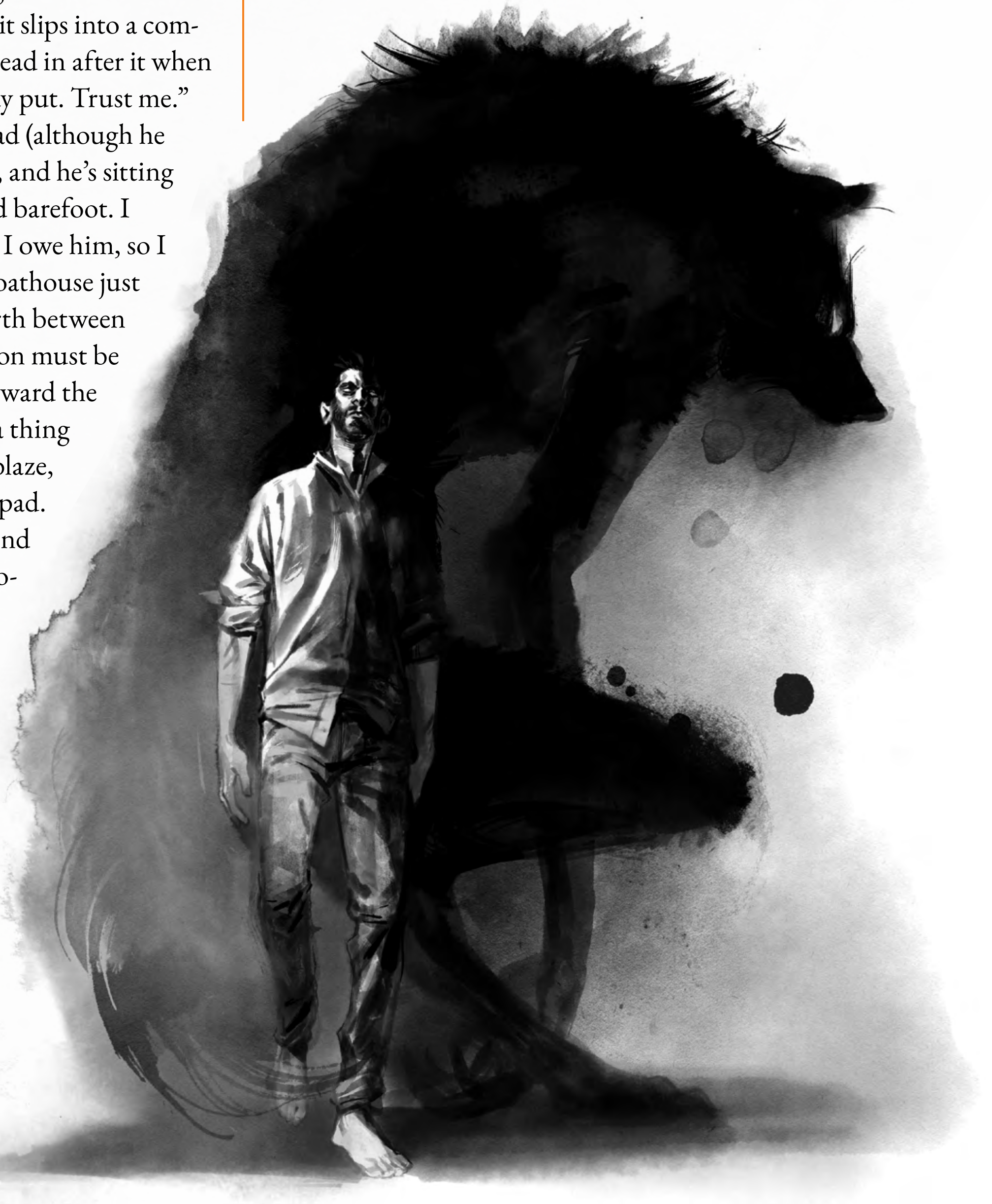
Footpad

Know how dogs have those dark pads on the bottoms of their feet? So does this... I figure he's a werewolf. Whatever he is, I call him Footpad. Somebody told me that that's an old word for "thief," and that fits, too. They say the Lord will return like a thief in the night. Well, every time Footpad turns up, he just... *turns up.* Like, one minute you're alone, and the next here's this fellow, looks a little like that superhero — you know the one, with the cool claws and the funny haircut? Ben Vereen? Whatever. Acts like him, too. Attitude enough for four people. First time I ever saw him, he had his arms folded, was leaning against a tree, watching some vampire hand us our asses. Footpad, he smiles and says, “Looks like y’all could use an assist.” Once he speaks, the vampire turns around — and Footpad unfolds his arms, steps toward the bloodsucker, and sweeps his hands up her front, almost like he’s flipping a table. Blood goes *everywhere*. We couldn’t believe it. When my friends and I manage to pull our eyes away from what’s left of Biker Lady from Hell, Footpad’s nowhere to be seen.

Next time I see him, we’re tailing the Lakefront Devil. We watch from the woods as it slips into a commercial boathouse. We’re about to head in after it when I hear Footpad say, “Y’all need to stay put. Trust me.” I look up, ’cause he has to be overhead (although he wasn’t as we approached that tree…), and he’s sitting on a branch, casual as you please and barefoot. I want to ask who he thinks he is, but I owe him, so I wait… and a few minutes later the boathouse just fucking *explodes*. I look back and forth between Footpad and the fire, and the question must be all over my face. He jerks his head toward the boathouse, says, “Now, would I do a thing like that?” I look again at this huge blaze, but the next time I look up, no Footpad.

Last time I saw him was rough, and it’s the main reason I want to tell people about him. We’re coming off a big win, we’re outside this bar we closed down, we round a corner — and in this parking lot are three guys in leather, biker types but all of them pasty, and they’re all fighting Footpad. Soon as the Kid sees who it is, he rushes in to help. At the same time, Footpad… changes. He’s not some smartass in need of a barber anymore, he’s… gigantic, like a bear on its hind legs. And help is not what he needs as he’s literally pulling these guys apart, but it’s too late, and the Kid catches claws to the head as Footpad finishes off the gang. Like an idiot, I yell the Kid’s name, and this killing machine turns our way. The others are about to draw on Footpad, but I know that’s every kind of mistake. Then, like lightning, he’s a man again. He looks at what’s left of the Kid, looks at me, and then he’s a big-ass dog and gone into the night.

Do yourselves a favor: If you bump into a dude talking shit and looking like The Greatest Showboat, or whoever that actor is, keep walking. You’ll live longer.



General Difficulty: 6/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 10 : 5, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 12 : 7, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 12 : 8, Stealth 9, Subterfuge (Misdirection) 8

Notes/Other Traits: Sharp's stealth game is peerless. He can seem to materialize, as if from nowhere, in the presence of humans. When departing such company, he likes to create distractions and has a sense of theater for doing so, whether he suggests that his audience has overlooked something obvious in the landscape around them (an almost invariably truthful claim), or he poses a riddle about various members of a cell and behaviors they may believe have gone unseen (Sharp misses nothing that occurs in his vicinity). He possesses all werewolf traits as well as Prescience ([Danger]) and Rush. Footpad can shift shape instantaneously, but if he does so into his battle form, he spends the first few minutes in an if-it-moves-kill-it mode that turns any being within reach into a target, regardless of how congenial he may have been before his change.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Russell Sharp, whom some hunters call "Footpad," is a rogue werewolf, separate from any society or groupings that bring together others of his kind. A loner at heart and mostly shunned by other werewolves, he lives by his own rules, which usually entails breaking any and every rule he encounters.
- He feels a remote kinship to humans who battle "monsters," even as he considers most "Hunters" beyond incompetent at that task. He'll aid underdog hunters in struggles with vampires and other predators, but Hunters who pursue a werewolf get no sympathy from Sharp; he may even intervene to allow a wounded or outnumbered lycanthrope to flee what he considers persecution.

Appearance: With his lean muscularity and perpetual five-o'clock shadow, Sharp bears more than a passing resemblance to Hollywood's favorite feral mutant, though Sharp's facial features are significantly more aquiline, and his complexion is tawnier. In human form he has brown eyes and dark, usually tangled hair; any fur-bearing form makes him difficult to see at night, so inky is his coat. He favors sturdy denim clothing, which he washes infrequently, and in proximity to the wilderness he hangs his steel-toe boots by their laces, out of view, in the branches of a tree, as he prefers to walk unshod in human form. The soles of both his feet are discolored by patches — large melanotic macules — which lend the appearance that sparked his nickname. Despite his visible aversion to laundering, neither he nor his clothing ever emit any aroma discernible by human noses.

In Stories

Given Sharp's Cheyenne ancestry, his conviction that every bureaucracy and every hierarchy is traitorous to the core offers no surprises for the historically informed. He feels that anyone lacking First Nations roots commits criminal trespass just by leading a life in the Americas. Years ago the intersection of these two attitudes put him at odds even with the werewolves who taught him his true nature. Rather than embittering him, though, Sharp's casting out by his own kind left him resigned to the absurdity of existence.

Thus, his sole commitment is to doing as he likes. When the activities of other supernatural beings or their stalkers don't affect or offend him, he does nothing. When the opposite is true, *watch out*. He considers ineptitude among self-identified Hunters laughable, but his greatest antipathy is for vampires who utter anything about "their territory" or make similar remarks that Sharp calls "neocolonialist dead-people noise." Whether he comes to the aid of a given Hunter or cell can depend upon his mood, the target, and/ or the aggregate asininity of the humans in his presence. Things that irritate him include (but aren't limited to) silver weaponry; bikers (living or undead); American patriotic emblems, particularly U.S. and Confederate ones; cars made purposely noisier; irresponsible treatment of animals, especially pets; and pollution or littering.

Encountering Footpad

- The most likely way to encounter Footpad is via a fairly straightforward observation of his aftermath, or following up on reports of his run-ins with… well, any survivor who would have kept records. These are likely law-enforcement officers, security guards, or anyone in a position of human authority who might be at odds with Sharp's I-do-what-I-want attitude, but are just as likely to be the bikers or self-styled patriots who would have roused his ire.
- After learning of a pattern that involves groups of gamblers who pit dogs against each other, later found torn apart, seemingly by their own animals, the Hunters investigate and find the culprit to be Sharp. If they intervene to protect the animal abusers, Sharp is likely to treat all the humans in his proximity as dispensable; if the Hunters aid the werewolf, he may be inclined to return such a favor — eventually, and on his own terms.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- However they deal with or initially encounter Footpad, a Hunter cell may find themselves dealing with a rankled police officer, motorcycle club, or drunken toughs, especially if Footpad is incapacitated, feels no compunction to come to their aid, or they haven't actually come to his attention yet.
- The Hunters cross paths with a werewolf that ignores them. If they succeed at following the quarry, it leads them to Sharp, with whom the werewolf seems to have a complicated relationship. Should the Hunters interfere, they are likely to suffer terribly at the hands of either werewolf involved; should Sharp or the other werewolf be killed in any struggle, the packmates vow to avenge the fallen; should Sharp escape because of the Hunters' intervention, he may be disposed to help them later amid their own straits.
- While stalking a lone vampire, the Hunters are ambushed by the bloodsucker's flunkies, whom Sharp was tracking separately. Depending upon how the Hunters react to his arrival (Sharp is most likely to use his wolf form to track vampires), he may help them and then disappear; or he may suffer wounds that cause Sharp to assume battle form, which endangers everyone near him.

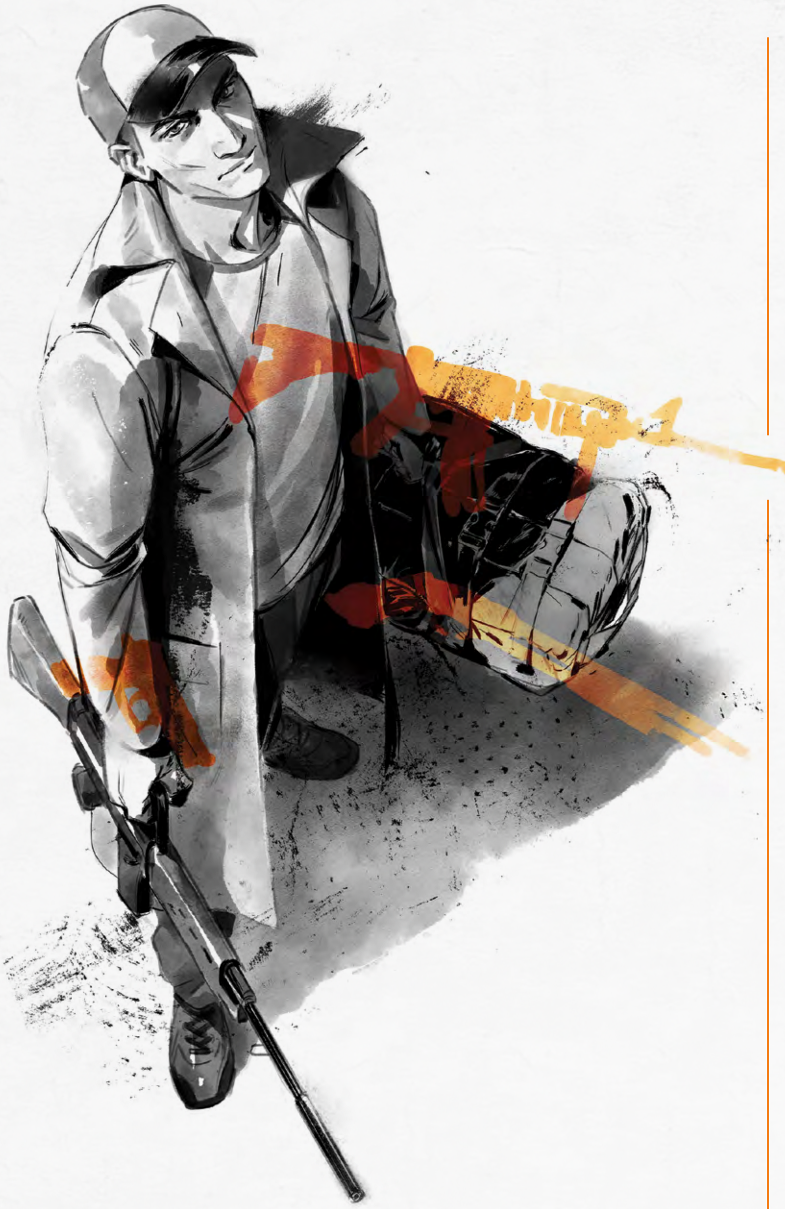
Sorcerers and Their Creations

Sorcerers themselves are generally human, with all the comparative frailty that suggests. However, each is somehow able to rewrite the rules of reality to their will in a unique way. As such, there are no general rules for sorcerers — what makes each special is their own particular take on the world and how they're able to redefine what's true of the world.

Gunshop

Other hunters have sometimes asked how I lost my right hand. Bold ones have wondered aloud whether it got *bitten* off. For those of you brought up unburdened by etiquette: Curiosity on the hunt is laudable, an uneducated guess in our calling is dangerous, and the answer is "Gunshop." In the recent past, a few of you tended to doubt your ears or my mouth and said, *Gunshot*? The answer to the second question is, "That, too." And Gunshop, in this case, is not a place but a person. White guy, six feet tall, dark hair, blue eyes, clean shaven. The times I saw him, he always had with him a green army duffle bag, about which more later.

So, through the dirt network comes word of a werewolf pack that's terrorizing this town upstate. Now, you know how these stories usually go: You and your pals saddle up, go to this boondocks burg, and find out what they've actually got is feral dogs or coyotes tearing up pets, that kind of thing. Not this time. This time, we reconnoiter the town by day, and by night



we stake out this derelict farm miles from the main drag. Around ten, we all jump when we hear someone announce himself in the dark: "Evenin', folks. I know why you all came out here. It's 'cause you think you're the solution to a problem most people don't believe exists. Well, I'm here to tell you that I'm the solution and the problem is you." Then he opens up on us with a machine gun. We shoot back, and he starts picking people off. By the time it's down to me and one other, I'm scared shitless. One shot later, it's me and this murderer, and I'm not ashamed to say I start pleading with him not to kill me. He tells me to throw out my guns and stand up. I figure he's going to plug me, but I'm out of friends and out of options, so I do what he says. I'm next to this wreck of a farmhouse with my hands raised, and he comes walking up with a duffel bag that looks stuffed with weapons. He scoops up a pistol one of my friends was using, tosses it to me, and says, "Catch." As I reach for it, he shoots my hand! Then he says, "You can call me Gunshop. Tell your friends about me, assuming I didn't kill them all. And tell them they all need to retire. Because as long as they keep hunting, so will I." Then he tells me which way the nearest hospital is — and he turns his back on me! For a second I think about using my remaining hand to kill this bastard. That's when he says, "Don't make me rethink things tonight."

Some of you have already heard that part of the story, from me or from somebody else I already talked to. I lost my hand and sold my guns more than a year ago. And I've told plenty of creedies about Gunshop, with varying results. For everybody who told me, "You can't let this guy's sense of duty get in the way of *your* sense of duty," listen up: He is not just some cowboy, and he's more than a crack shot. I know, because I saw him again, outside the airport near me. I was there to pick somebody up when I saw this... Hunter-hunter hail a cab. Thing is, as he got inside, Gunshop was carrying an empty duffle bag. I noticed because... who leaves the airport with empty luggage, right? At that point I wanted to put distance between me and him, but a cop was motioning me ahead. So I pass the taxi on the left, away from Gunshop — and I see his hand is resting on a duffle bag that looks full enough to have a human body inside! Like, seconds after I saw it empty! One day later a "gang shootout" here made national news. You do the math. Me, I'm out for keeps now.

General Difficulty: 5/ 4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms 10, Investigate (Hunter Activity) 9, Technology (Firearms) 8

Notes/ Other Traits: Through some combination of really wanting them and that mysterious duffle bag, Kopell can manifest almost any firearm, but he must do so out of view of witnesses or cameras, lest he suffer magical blowback. Thus, he routinely hunts Hunters while packing nothing — or nothing more threatening than a .22 handgun. The real threats come from the many pockets of his secondhand army-camouflage trousers and his military-issue duffle bag. Out of sight he can manifest any firearm with a damage rating equal to or below the current Danger level. One other supernatural advantage he employs regularly might be called facial-recognition recognition: Should a person near Kopell recognize him, he knows he's been "made," but not by whom. He is sure to arm himself at the earliest opportunity thereafter. He also possesses Prescience (6), mainly used to detect ambushes or other traps.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- The individual calling himself Gunshop was born Derek Kopell. As a young man he became aware of people who took up arms to oppose "creatures of the night." Several such hunters killed Kopell's closest friend, a fellow willworker who used her powers to cure the sick. The loss unhinged him. He has since dedicated himself to hounding, trapping, terrorizing, and terminating Hunters and their allies.
- At this stage of his existence, Kopell (which he'd pronounce like compel, minus the M, except that he hasn't uttered his birth name in decades) is something between a mass murderer and a serial killer. His preferred weapons are high-caliber semi-automatic long guns, but he has expertise with firearms ranging from antique derringers to custom-made shotguns.
- Gunshop turns the tables on the traditional Hunt — he investigates and prepares to ambush the players' characters, much as they would investigate and prepare to deal with their quarry in a more conventional Hunt.

Appearance: Kopell looks as if he might have just completed a shopping spree at a gun show or just returned from a weekend in pursuit of game. His attire combines military, survivalist, and outdoor gear. Because he can also manifest such clothing, he has shaken tails and eluded pursuit in public spaces by conjuring a new outfit inside a toilet stall, changing clothing there, and flooding the area by stuffing his abandoned threads into the commode before flushing it. His escapes came amid the subsequent chaos. He favors unadorned baseball caps, hoodies, utility vests, cargo pants, shirts with long sleeves, and ankle-length coats when the weather warrants them. Because his eyes are violet-colored, he alters them, hunt to hunt, with tinted contact lenses, usually blue ones. Kopell's relatively light complexion and neutral accent lead many people to mistake him for a white person, though he self-identifies as mixed race.

In Stories

In his youth, before he became wizard of weaponry, Kopell's racial ambiguity put him in places where he heard numerous slurs directed at people like his mother. He seethed at these remarks but swallowed them for years. After he transformed himself through technomagic, he took to exacting vengeance upon bigots like the ones who surrounded him in earlier times. By masking his magics and his ancestry (he keeps his head shaved to stubble, as his hair is the most obviously African of his features), he drew in the unwary, let them hoist themselves petardily, and punished the lot in varying, usually nonlethal ways.

Kopell "disappeared" the engine from the costly luxury car of a braggart who liked to torment street people, his employees, women — anyone the man perceived as "weak." After the fellow replaced the car and spent weeks characterizing the engine thieves in ethnically stereotypical fashion, Kopell altered the man's private elevator in a decidedly lethal way and never had to listen to him again.

Things changed in the aftermath of his friend Miranda's murder by fanatical Hunters. Thereafter, his approach was to behave like the people he hunted, by gathering intelligence about supernatural "others" — but Kopell's targets invariably were those who meant harm to said others. His modus operandi: turn hunter stakeouts into death traps, but always leave alive one member of any cell. He tends to maim a designated survivor, usually through gunfire, to decrease their capability at hunting and increase the likelihood of their conveying his message ("Retire or die").

Death is Kopell's true tool — and the sole exit ramp from his chosen path. He will never stop his campaign as long as he feels able to wage it. Now in his late 40s — though he looks a decade younger — he has occasionally pondered his own retirement, but the ongoing existence of monster hunters (whom he calls "the stupidest of all police") acts like a thorn in his wounded heart.

Kopell pays close attention to tabloid reporting. He's familiar enough with genuine supernatural beings to discern real from fake in those pages, but he sees in all such reportage potential traps for Hunters. He visits gun shows but never makes purchases at them; instead, he sifts their crowds for likely targets. Ironically, his powers mean that a gun shop is one place he'll never be found.

Encountering Gunshop

- If Kopell feels like he has an overwhelming advantage, he may, in a moment of hubris, fire "a shot over the bow" to rattle the Hunters and announce his presence. Part of this vanity is a strange desire to test the limits of his capacity to fail, thereby forcing him into a wisely considered retirement.
- Although Kopell long ago used technomagic to scrub his past — he believes — out of existence, one image of him lingers on the Internet. Thanks to magical blowback, this yearbook photo starts to show up at random during unrelated online searches by members of any cell he attacks without complete success. The key identifying the five pictured high school chess club members (*L to R: Q. Fischel, B. Herman, D. Kopel, L. Kronstein, J. Murphy,* with *Kopell* misspelled as shown) is out of order, and the reproduction of the picture is blurred; should someone nevertheless make an intuitive leap to realize that the youngster with the afro then is Gunshop now, a Hunter could rattle him briefly. If the person calling him out mispronounces Kopell, he'll become enraged and announce that he no longer plans to let the speaker outlive the rest of the cell.
- Should Kopell be fatally wounded in the presence of the Hunters, his last words are sure to be, "Know why I did all this to you? Because you so-called monster hunters have no sense of irony."

Additional Dangers and Victims

- A "designated survivor" from one of Kopell's past attacks tells the group about what happened to her and her friends. Either she walks with a cane and has an artificial kneecap, or her primary hand has been replaced with a prosthesis.
- Kopell has no inherent desire to die in a gunfight, and will readily negotiate an end to violence if an upjumped band of hayseed would-be heroes. Of course, after the fact, Kopell has no intention of honoring a gunpoint conversion, and will turn on the Hunters at first opportunity, becoming an even more dedicated foe.
- Unless he doesn't. There's a distinct possibility that Gunshop will see genuine opportunity in cooperating with the Hunters. That's not exactly a win for the cell, however, as having a mass-murderer-slash-serial-killer as a sympathetic ally may cause the Hunters to question their purpose. And, of course, Gunshop is clever enough to feign friendship with the Hunters as bait for future Hunter cells. (Storytellers, be careful with these last two, as showing the players that the quarry is forever irredeemable may undermine Chronicle Tenets, particularly for players who enjoy telling stories about making amends or giving second chances.)

Kieren Gray, Whatsisname

I never did get his name, you know? That was the odd thing about it. I always meant to ask, from the moment he moved in next door, but every time I started to, something else would catch my mind. A dog barking out of nowhere, or a screen door slamming in the breeze down the street. Or maybe he told me and I just forgot. Makes sense, almost — he kinda had a way of sliding into the background, always in the corner of your eye even if he was standing right in front of you. A shadow of a man, I told Theresa. Back when I could still tell Theresa things.

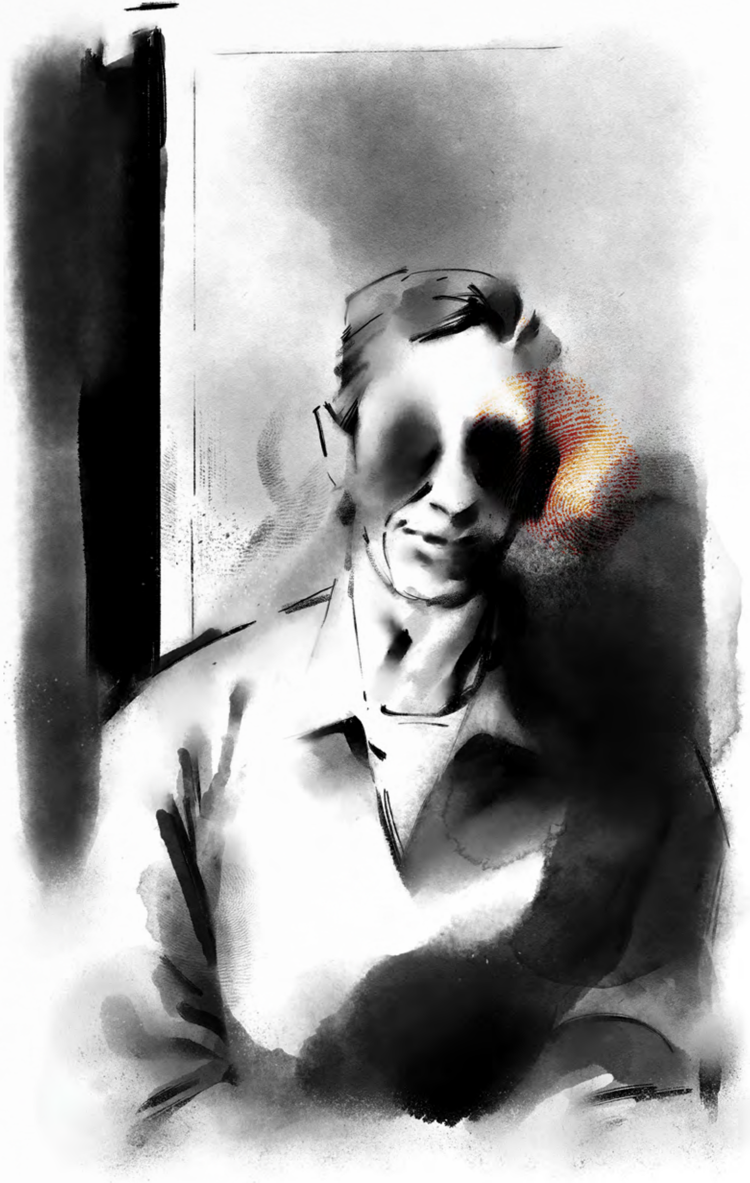
I'd told her not to move into that damn house. Didn't know her then, just seemed like a nice sort. She'd waved after seeing the place, said we'd be neighbors soon and asked was this the kind of block that had cookouts. It used to be that kind of block before Mr. Whatsisname moved in, I thought, but instead I just said, "Last two people who lived in that bottom unit got killed, you know. I'd keep a wide berth if I were you."

"You think that old man upstairs is gonna kill me?" she said, laughing like we were already friends. "I could outrun him for sure." That's right, he was an older man. I remember that now. Not that I ever spoke to him, far as I can remember. Even Theresa spoke to him only long enough to pay her rent, and she'd smudge sage once a month just to make sure the spirits of the former residents weren't going to come creeping up on her at night. She spent half her nights with me by then, but you never could be too careful.

"Wasn't him who did it," I'd told her back then. True enough. The ex-college football guy, with the big arms and broad shoulders and the best pecan pie recipe I'd ever tasted, and his girlfriend stabbed him over a parking ticket. One second Mr. Whatsisname was handing it to her, the next the street was all sirens and gasps and sad shaken heads. And that lady with the two kids seemed like she was in over her head to begin with. Not enough hands to keep up with the little ones, maybe, but never would've thought she'd be the type to harm her own flesh and blood. Had Whatsisname offering to babysit for her and everything. Or so I heard; never spoke to the man.

I wish Theresa'd listened to me, even if it means I'd never have gotten her to lay next to me or hear what her laugh was like in the midnight air. Soft against a pillow. 'Cause then I'd never have noticed how late she came in at nights sometimes, like we two weren't together, like she was hiding something from me. I usually don't pay attention to things like that, but that guy, Whatsisname, I think he said something once about her hanging around places I might not like and he wouldn't let his woman lie to him, no-sir-ee. Not that I ever talked to him really, not that I can remember. Theresa did, though, even got that gun from him for protection or some such. Can't remember why now, but something.

Never liked guns around, don't know much about 'em. Maybe that's why, when Theresa and I were fighting about who was where and she was waving it at me, I grabbed at it wrong and it fell and bang, there was Theresa, laying there bleeding, in the same spot where maybe that football player fell, right dead center of the living room. Don't remember too much after that, not between then and now, except how, out of the corner of my eye, while I was standing there wailing and Theresa was flat out on the floor, I could have sworn I saw that man, smiling bright as day. And I never did get his name.



General Difficulty: 5/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 7, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight (Sore Spot) 11, Subterfuge 8, Persuasion (Incite Violence) 11, Stealth 7

Notes/ Other Traits: Invisibility. Kieren has the ability to fade from the mind's eye. It's hard for humans to remember who he is, what he looks like, or their interactions with him. He isn't able to erase himself completely, just move himself to the edge of other people's lives. The more interactions he has with them, the less successful this is, but even for those he has driven to murder, their recollection of him is faint at best. Kieren also convinces people to confide in him, though they won't remember doing it. The combination of this ability and his relentlessly practiced technique of asking the right questions leads people to confess things they might not otherwise have revealeded to even close friends. Finally, once Kieren is aware of an individual's desires, the thing that can incite someone to violence, he has the ability to irritate that, almost the way that too many drinks or a frustrating day at work might.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Kieren Gray believes he is keeping up his end of a bargain with an otherworldly creature, and must deliver souls killed violently but cannot kill them directly or order them to be killed directly. To fulfill this bargain, he sets up homes and rents out part of them, then insinuates himself in his renter's lives and makes suggestions that will put death in motion.
- Despite taking many precautions to keep himself in the background, Kieren's houses eventually attract attention, and he must abandon them or sell them at a loss. He sees this as a personal failure and wants to figure out a way to keep his operation going without having to move.
- Kieren seemingly has a compulsion or other limitation on his modus operandi. He never attempts to set up the same exact situation or motive for a killing twice, even if it seems like it would be easy.

Appearance: Kieren is, in a word, unremarkable. He shifts his appearance to fit into whatever situation he is in, tending to average the last five people he has spoken to, and his appearance, like everything else about him, can't be held well in other people's memories. If asked, people would describe him as average. Average height, average weight, average face. He dresses primarily in neutral colors — grays, tans, blacks — and tends to wear clothing that fits well but isn't particularly notable, just a bit out of fashion.

In Stories

Kieren Gray made a bad bargain with a power he doesn't fully understand, and now he knows he's running out of time. His encroaching end stresses him, and he turns his frustrations and cruelty toward those he has the ability to harm, rather than the entity aggravating him. He's a classic, punching-down bully, even if he's not the physical type.

Kieren fears that repetition of his methods will allow the creature he believes he owes souls to gain leverage on him, finding some sort of personal preference or characteristic weakness. Always drawn to violence, but afraid of getting his hands dirty, his bargain has given him a nearly perfect outlet for experiments on human nature. Can he convince one human to murder another just by making the right suggestions at the right time? The answer, it turns out, is yes. While it has taken Kieren some years to hone his craft, he now practices it by luring renters looking for a good deal to a house where he can keep an eye on them and work out a way to eventually cause their violent deaths. Once they are dead, he merely has to touch the body to seal the deal, and then he can start all over again.

With Kieren's ability to fade into the background, he's never implicated in the murders he incites, but the houses he owns develop a reputation, something he has resigned himself to but is constantly trying to find a way around. Over time, after two or three deaths on the same property, it becomes hard to find renters other than the desperate, and desperate people don't give him the room he needs to make the deaths unique. Kieren prefers working with "good, promising" people who have many options and free will, people who could easily walk away from the situations that he tries to place them in, but never do. Perhaps it's cheating that he sometimes uses his sorcery abilities to nudge things along, drawing out unprovoked confessions and putting a bit of force behind his mild suggestions of vengeance, jealousy, or anger, but Kieren thinks of both abilities as no different than the work of a good bartender with a friendly ear and a generous pour.

Given Kieren's efforts to remain unassociated with the crimes that he helps to make possible, the Hunters will most likely encounter one of his houses before they encounter him. Kieren takes his time with and between each new victim, and he currently occupies his third house in his current city. He abandoned his first, a two-family townhouse in a bustling neighborhood, since he contrived three distinct murders there. Now a boarded-up ruin that attracts squatters of all types, it has mostly fallen off Kieren's radar, but he does occasionally revisit it to try to incite violence among the unfortunates dwelling there, just to keep his skills honed. Neighbors looking to stop this violence and/ or figure out who owns the home aren't the sort to trust either the media or local authority, and consider it somewhere between a tragedy site and a "haunted house." It's exactly the sort of situation to put it on intrepid Hunters' radar.

Kieren's second house was seized by the city and torn down, something he remains furious about. Now it's a community garden, where Kieren naturally has purchased a plot. He hasn't yet figured out how to do his work in a place where so many people come and go, but he has made inroads befriending a few of the regulars. An unexpected act of violence tied to that garden could get the Hunters' attention, especially if their research turns up the four different violent deaths that happened in and around the house that used to stand there.

If the Hunters track Kieren down and speak to them, he turns his ability to manipulate conversation and learn people's secrets against them, and will exploit any perceived divisions in the group as a way to get the Hunters focused on one another instead of thinking about him. *Danny drinks, you know, and Marisol tried to fuck Tina's boyfriend*. Hunters may have trouble maintaining their potentially already tenuous relationships and group cohesion after a conversation with Kieren, and he deliberately tries to set their nerves on edge. If Kieren is successful at learning something intimate from one of the Hunters and believes they'll continue to pursue him, he'll do his best to add physical objects to his home that are meant to provoke an emotional response to that information, but he will not pursue the Hunters or lash out against them unless cornered. He is too busy working on befriending the first-floor renter in his new four-family building and making sure they feel right at home.

Encountering Kieren

- A journalist investigating the connection between two properties owned by the same shell company in two different cities, each of which had multiple unrelated murders in it, believes they have hit upon a haunted-house story and asks the Hunters to find the ghost responsible. The journalist then nearly kills someone in an uncharacteristic act of road rage, and cannot shake the feeling that it's related to the story.
- The local house tied to the story is Kieren's former house, torn down to build a community garden. Locals tending the garden are willing to talk about the sad series of murders that happened in the house and how they're glad that the place has been turned to some positive purpose. Hunters can learn from various gardeners that the previous owner was very angry when the building was torn down and, very melodramatically, swore vengeance. Oddly, no one can really remember seeing him before that moment. The Hunters may also encounter Kieren at the garden, as he's a member, but won't remember any conversations with him.
- Following local rumors, using the journalist's research skills, or following their own leads, can point the Hunters toward Kieren's first home in the city (the squat). This puts them firmly on Kieren's radar. At some point during their investigation, he'll initiate what appears to be a casual conversation with the group. If they're not on their guard, they won't remember much of it and may be on edge afterward. He'll also try to wheedle secrets from one or more Hunters that he can use to throw them off guard.
- At the squat, local rumors give the Hunters more information on the murders: No one can seem to really remember who owned the place, but it was definitely a man who was friendly with all of the

victims; the murders themselves were unrelated but all were "crimes of passion" or accidents during a heated situation; and the same sorts of violence of convenience involved murder weapons that were strangely on hand. Who kills someone with a corkscrew?

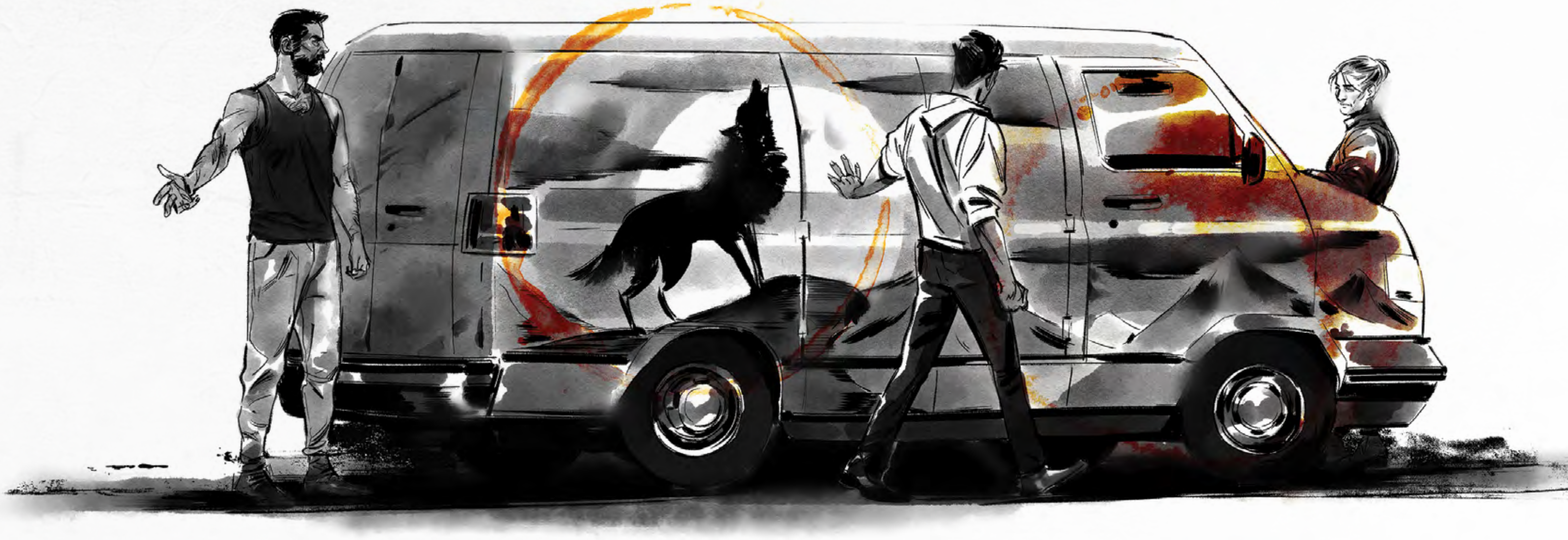
- If Hunters choose to find out more about what drove the journalist into the road rage incident, the journalist mentions stopping by the four-family house thinking that it might be linked even though nothing seemed off kilter there. The journalist can't seem to quite remember whom they met or what happened during the conversation, but does recall a sense of "always moving out of people's way" in life and a sudden need to stand their ground — a feeling that carried over into the road-rage incident.
- Given enough investigation, Hunters will discover the four-family home, which was purchased fairly recently. If this happens after their conversation with Kieren, things in the windows remind the Hunters he spoke with of some tense memory in their past, putting the cell on edge as they try to investigate. If they try to come on to the property, the first-floor resident confronts them, holding a gun. She seems confused and doesn't recall where she got her gun, but is very clear that they shouldn't be trespassing on people's property and are liable to be shot.
- Eventually, the Hunters should be able to identify Kieren as always being proximate to the discomfort and memory lacunae. He'll let the Hunters investigate his apartment in the four-family house, even though it's full of evidence that he was involved in the murders in his previous homes through journals, news clippings, and unsettling written conversations with himself. He'll lurk at the periphery of the Hunters' awareness during the investigation, and they'll (probably very frustratingly) lose track of him until he makes himself known. He congratulates them on making his life's work difficult and offers them a choice — there's a standoff brewing downstairs between the armed first-floor resident and a sleep-deprived late-shift worker whom he encouraged to visit. He's no physical threat and physically overpowering him is easy, if that's the route the Hunters take... at which point a shot rings out from downstairs. Or do they attend to the human crisis first and find the sorcerer fled upon returning to his apartment?

Additional Dangers and Victims

- The Hunters aren't the only ones investigating the house. The sibling of one of the victims of the first house believes that Kieren was somehow involved and has finally tracked him down. They plan to stop him from harming anyone else by burning the building down. At the Storyteller's discretion, this act of arson can be something that Kieren knows of and is passively inciting, again placing a potential catastrophe in front of them just as he's in their grasp.

Coyotizán, an Infinity Within

Seven victims with anomalous conditions had turned up in multiple areas across the U.S. in the last three years. Four of them showed total transformation of the arms and legs, one of the whole head, and two of... other body parts. It was as if the victims' bodies had been grafted seamlessly into different varieties of organic matter, prompting colorful descriptors such as "hive arms," "root legs," or "cactus head" to show up in the reports. The conditions appeared to be noncommunicable, but no one wanted to get near them to prove it. All victims were Mexican, which led to the tense collaboration between the FBI's SAD and the Direccion de Atención a Amenazas Extranormales, or Extranormal Threat Attention Directorate, the supernatural counterespionage branch of Mexico's own intelligence center, the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia. The suits on both sides thought they might be facing an anomalous serial killer, but they have since reconsidered this stance. Large cities and their surroundings seem to be the center of whatever this phenomenon is, but it's



entirely possible more victims exist in remote areas where they haven't yet been found.

All save one was discovered dead. The exception was a woman in South Philadelphia, nine months pregnant, who managed to stay alive long enough to give birth and answer some questions.

The victim was from the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. She remembered going to a parking lot in Santa Lucia del Camino to meet the *coyotes* who would bring her across the border. She had traveled with a group of 12, and expressed surprise over the fact that the *coyotes* charged very little and seemed rather amicable. According to her, they promised her she wouldn't have to deal with *la migra*, and the only instruction she received was to run when she was told to without stopping or looking back. Most of the others were given heavy bags to carry, but not her, due to her pregnancy. (She added that one of the *coyotes* wasn't happy with this, but the others insisted.) They instructed her to board the coyotes' vehicle along with the rest of her group (an old sky-blue van, she couldn't identify the brand or model). Once they had all embarked, the floor "melted under her feet," in her own words, and instead of in the van, she found herself in *another place*, which she described as "a forest in the stars." In the process, she heard the voice of one of the *coyotes* behind her, urging her to run, which she did. But that's the last thing she told the agents before she died, so who knows what happened after.

If her testimony wasn't strange enough, the DAAE corroborated the victim's claims with the authorities of Santa Lucia del Camino, even managing to contact the woman's family. According to her parents, she left her house no more than a day before she was found, and they were surprised to hear about the infant, claiming she was barely past her first trimester when she left. The suits are losing hair over not knowing what this is. Each thinks it's a scandal waiting to blow up. And rumor has it the paperwork required to keep it under wraps is enough to require its own cubicle in both of the agencies involved. It might be someone playing with a toy they don't understand, or *something* offering people hope and leading them to their deaths. Neither option is good for anyone.

The Coyotes

General Difficulty: 4/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools:
Antonio: Investigation 7, Occult 7
Valentin: Firearms 7, Awareness 7
Carolina: Leadership 7, Subterfuge 7

Notes / Other Traits: Those transported to Coyotizán's pathways find themselves surrounded by shifting alien sights. Looking at things too closely can evoke headaches and confusion as senses reject the strange colors, patterns, and geometry of the otherworld. The landscape is unpredictable, blooming into wild luminous forests, shadowy marshlands, and arid wastes within the span of a few meters at times, and seemingly extending to infinity at others. However, the warlock who built Coyotizán carved the pathways to be an anchor in the chaos, and so long they're followed closely, one can exit through one of the other ends without error. The main problem is that sometimes the shifting terrain itself makes it impossible to follow the road, and any detour within the numinous realm can unexpectedly turn into an unending journey. Anyone treading the pathways without guidance from one of the Coyotes must succeed on an Intelligence + Occult test at Danger Difficulty or become lost. Individuals lost in Coyotizán are unable to perceive the passage of time, but eventually (probably) return to the physical world, albeit with one or more features permanently exchanged, replaced by a part of the realm itself. On rare occasions, parts "traded" from victims can be perceived while within Coyotizán — a hand reaching out from a branch, or a head mutely gibbering at the top of a cactus.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Coyotizán is a series of pathways connecting multiple places across the United States through a network of strange spiritual trails that, for unknown reasons, all exist in an old van. The preternatural roads were found by a warlock in the nineties, who met their end at the hand of Hunters five years ago. Three of these Hunters found the van and discovered its connection to the pathways within it, and after exploring them and learning their purpose over time, they've turned the van into a mobile smuggling operation that travels through Mexico offering its service where it's needed.
- The three Hunters who own and run Coyotizán's smuggling operation are Antonio Zitla, Carolina Cabrera, and Valentín Rocha. Valentín suffers fugues and has a remarkably fatalistic mindset after multiple dealings with Coyotizán's supernatural forces, but Antonio and Carolina remain somewhat grounded. Motivated by greed and what she feels is "a way out," Carolina is fine to continue doing the work that they started. Antonio, on the other hand, basically feels trapped in a situation that has become wildly out of hand.
- The strange interstitial space that Coyotizán passes through appears to be an entity of its own, sometimes changing its surroundings in response to the emotion of those within it, almost as if trying to reach out and communicate. Any of its actual thoughts or desires elude human comprehension though, and attempting to commune with them can risk temporary (so far) dissociative state for anyone who interacts with the para-dimensional space.

Appearance: The object connecting Coyotizán to reality is a rickety 1996 Dodge cargo van painted mostly sky-blue, with a mural of a wolf howling at the moon on one side and a white-bearded wizard on the other. It bears multiple rusty scratches and bumps across the paint job, but it has no overt indication of its supernatural nature. Carolina is an older, scar-ridden veteran rarely seen out of her tactical gear. Antonio is a sharp-looking thirtysomething whose casual appearance masks his focus and drive. And Valentín is an accomplished athlete with a harsh attitude and a hatred for sleeves. Anything or anyone in the back of the van when the door is closed immediately experiences a psychedelic spectacle as they're transported to the inexplicable and discombobulating nexus of places to which the van is connected, with no direct means of return.

In Stories

Coyotizán is as much of an object as it is a location. Depending on how much the Storyteller wants to feature it in their story, it can serve as a device, an antagonistic force, or the backdrop for an entire chapter. Hunters might be drawn to recover the van for their own use to accomplish a greater goal (at no small risk to themselves), or they might be driven to stop the exploits of the Coyote Trio by destroying it for good.

Out of the Trio, Antonio is the one most likely to turn on his companions if Hunters promise to help him get out safely. His curiosity for the occult drew him into the whole thing, and at the beginning he genuinely thought they were helping people find ways to a better life. But now the group is entangled with drug lords and criminals and all he wants is a way out of the mess.

Valentín is the opposite of Antonio: He's convinced he can build some kind of lasting… *something* with the van, and will fight to the end to keep it in his possession. He has already defended it multiple times from those who have discovered their secret, and will continue to do so until no one's left to threaten them.

Finally, Carolina stands in the middle. She's not as obsessed as Valentín, but the prospect of retiring with a pile of money is definitely more appealing than living the rest of her life fighting monsters and smugglers for scraps. She's willing to defend their "investment," but at the end of the day, she won't risk her life over it.

The warlock who originally created Coyotizán used it to move quickly between multiple locations. The path splits three ways in the middle, and the end of each route is attuned to one major city: Los Angeles in the west, Chicago in the middle, and New York City in the east. However, an unavoidable side-effect of the mutability of the strange dimension is that the exit points of Coyotizán are imprecise. Someone trying to reach New York City might end up somewhere in Pennsylvania or Massachusetts, for instance, though the destination is always near or within a city. Whether that's just the way it works, or if there's an element missing for it to function properly, is unknown.

Additionally, it's entirely possible for Coyotizán to have hidden pathways leading to other places that the Coyote Trio hasn't yet discovered. The Storyteller can add as many of these connections as story needs invite, as well as the conditions required to discover them.

Encountering Coyotizán

- Hunters can learn about the strangely mutated victims found by the SAD or DAAE either through contacts in those organizations or by picking up rumors from the occult community. Clues from that investigation can lead them to cross paths with the Coyote Trio and their smuggling operations, as well as their first encounter with the strange van.
- If Hunters threaten to steal or destroy the van upon meeting the trio, Antonio reveals that a group of immigrants went inside and hasn't reported back yet. He thinks there's a possibility that if the van is destroyed, the pathways of Coyotizán will be lost, causing the immigrants to be stuck in the other dimension forever.
- An acquaintance of the Hunters (either another Hunter or a personal connection) heard about the van and went in to investigate, or may themselves be an immigrant seeking relocation. They become lost in the other-space, having never emerged on the other side, prompting the Hunters to begin a search for them.
- When the need arises to smuggle something past the Coalition's all-seeing eyes, Hunters are referred to the Coyote Trio as the most immediate option, requiring them to brave the pathways of Coyotizán while possibly carrying and protecting valuable cargo.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- The realm Coyotizán crosses behaves like a massive living organism, and everything within it is being constantly assimilated by it, whether voluntarily or not. This means that those who travel or hide out there for extended periods of time risk finding themselves changed, adopting strange characteristics the landscape has at the time and, ultimately, becoming part of the terrain itself.
- Many strange denizens inhabit the van's living elsewhere. The path of Coyotizán used to be out of the way of these creatures, but its recent increased use has drawn their attention, and now many of them prowl its vicinity in search of prey. At the Storyteller's discretion, this might be predatory spirits or might open the door to an entirely different supernatural creature.

Ghosts

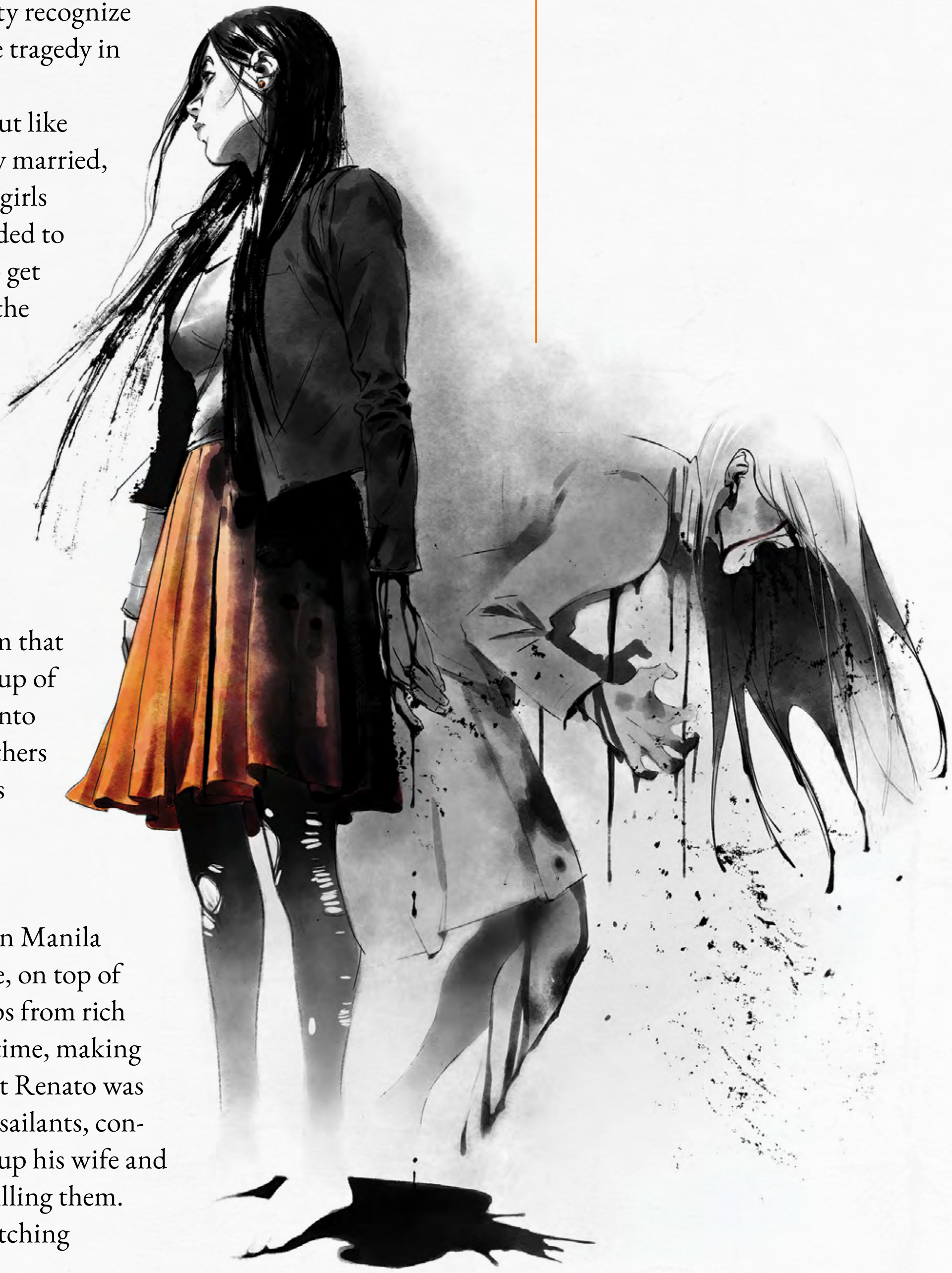
The Lost Girl of Little Baguio

Amid criticism of the Philippine government for rolling blackouts and grisly accounts of the "Chop Chop Girls" found in dumpsters across the city, the robbery and murder of a small middle-class family in Manila scandalized the nation in 1995. Even now, decades after the fact, people from the city recognize the name of the victims, and speak of the tragedy in low whispers.

On a Monday morning that started out like every other, Renato Dela Pena — happily married, father of three daughters — dropped his girls off at school and went to work. He intended to stay overtime at the office, as he hoped to get enough done to justify taking a leave by the middle of the week. It was going to be he and his wife's wedding anniversary. Renato came home to police cars and well-intended neighbors hoping to keep him from going into the house and seeing the bodies.

Conflicting reports detail what occurred between Renato leaving and his grisly discovery. Some neighbors claim that they saw Gianna, Renato's wife, let a group of boys familiar with one of her daughters into the house sometime in the afternoon. Others claim that the peace of the afternoon was shattered by horrendous screaming for help, and that someone was spotted running from the home.

Forensics and criminal investigation in Manila was untrained and inefficient at that time, on top of being susceptible to bribery and cover-ups from rich and influential people in the city at that time, making the investigative details less certain. What Renato was told was that a group of five unknown assailants, confirmed male, entered his home, rounded up his wife and daughters, and brutalized them before killing them. They lingered for hours in the house, watching



television, eating food from his own kitchen, and moving on after they got bored. Evidence of drug use was found at the site.

Five years passed with Renato crying for justice, friends and relatives raising what money they could to help him hire the best people to help him get it. The campaign ground to a halt when all fingers pointed toward Miko Benedicto and his group of friends, all of them progeny of elected officials. In a cruel act of revenge for being spurned by one of Renato's daughters, Miko and his friends had broken into the Dela Pena home and did as they pleased on a drug-addled bender. The fathers of the five boys denied everything and used their political influence to quash the investigation and Renato's hopes for justice. From nasty fabricated stories about Renato himself to sabotaging private investigation attempts, the case ground to a halt with exactly no one being thrown in jail.

Even more time has passed, and Congressman Benedicto and his *kumpares* believe that it's only a matter of time before this "mishap" fades from collective memory. As things stand, Renato Dela Pena — crushed by his failure to avenge his family — was spirited away to Canada by well-intended relatives, to keep him out of trouble. However, taxi drivers who do their rounds in Little Baguio — Dela Pena's old neighborhood — try not to take passengers after nightfall and warn newcomers to their companies about the girl they may spot on a particular street corner, trying to flag down a ride. At best, she'll end up naming the address of the old Dela Pena home, and be a quiet thing in the backseat all the way up to her disappearing completely. Sometimes, however, she'll name the address of one of those five bastard congressmen or wherever their sons have shacked up now. Drivers who have seen the Girl and brought her anywhere beyond the former Dela Pena residence will describe how they watched her step out of the car and stare up toward the home before disappearing. As she disappears, the Girl's appearance reverts to her bloodied, ruined state in which she died.

So far, the biggest loss that taxi drivers and any good-hearted strangers have experienced are time, gas money, payment for the ride, and no small amount of anxiety given their close encounter with the supernatural. Stephanie, the Girl, has been slowly gaining power over her ghostly echo, and she's managed to crawl her way back up from... wherever people go after death.

Her father failed to get justice. In his place, she's out for revenge.

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Etiquette 6, Insight 8, Persuasion 8

Notes / Other Traits: Stephanie Dela Pena psychically siphons life energy from anyone who gives her a ride. Depending on the length of the ride and her mood, she can cause anything from one to 10 levels of superficial damage to Health and Willpower, the victim losing an equal amount from each. The damage isn't noticeable until she exits the vehicle, at which time the driver suffers the full brunt of the loss in the form of fatigue, shortness of breath, and (in extreme cases) internal hemorrhaging and stroke. She can also manipulate electric and electronic equipment at a distance of up to 10 meters, either controlling it or shorting it out, potentially causing minor explosions dealing aggravated damage equal to current Danger and starting fires. As a ghost she is also incorporeal and invisible, visually manifesting only when she feeds. She is completely immune to physical harm whether invisible or not, though methods beyond the mundane (such as Endowment Edges) can harm her.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Because she has no intention to hurt most people, Stephanie has been taking things slow to make sure her victims don't become permanently ill or get hurt. She uses this energy to power her own abilities, and go after the five people — now grown men — who killed her, her sisters, and her mother over a decade ago.
- Out of all her targets, Stephanie is particularly motivated to avenge herself upon Miko. She feels personally responsible for her own death and the death of her siblings and mother, because Miko is her ex-boyfriend. She had broken up with him a few months before the massacre.
- While Stephanie would love to visit the same pain she and her family suffered upon Miko, her

principal motivation is actually justice. She agrees to stand down if Hunters promise to finish her father's work. However, she resumes her violent pursuit should they fail, whether or not that failure comes as a result of the Hunters' own inability.

Appearance: Stephanie's dressed like any other hip female college student from her time would have been. She died at age 20, and was petite, with long black hair and dark brown eyes. Initially, the only outward indicators that she isn't actually alive may be the fact that she's a little pale, and that she has no feet (her form fades the closer it is to the ground). When she drops the phantasmal disguise she affects in order to appear human, the brutal markings of her killing appear all over her body: rope and cigarette burns and stab wounds that blossom red and bleed as though she's still being shanked repeatedly by an assailant's knife. She forever cries blood and eyeball humors, in an amount varying by her emotional state.

In Stories

For Hunters on the beat, the Lost Girl of Baguio represents a rare case of a lucid ghost who's *exactly* aware of who she is and what happened to her. Prior to the players' Hunters, she has encountered a Hunter only once before (Hatag; see "Other Dangers"), though she experiences plenty of human contact, given her haunt style. If Hunters talk about what they do and display familiarity with the supernatural, Stephanie reveals that she has little of the depth of knowledge they possess. All that matters to her is that she came back from the dead and has some unfinished business of her own to resolve as best as she can.

Stephanie has learned on the fly what otherworldly powers she wields, and can't fully control herself. Comparatively, she may be notably stronger than other supernatural entities the Hunters may have seen, but she isn't hard to "fight" if Hunters have the means to affect her. She doesn't know where her mother and siblings are. When she regained awareness and began crawling up from the "dark place" in which she found herself, she was already alone. She fixates on light sources, and occasionally shivers as though she feels cold. If asked about this, the Lost Girl will plainly say that she feels cold all the time.

Poltergeist-like manifestations occur whenever Stephanie becomes emotional, as do electrical fluctuations and electronic devices going on the fritz. With some concentration, Stephanie can exercise a limited amount of control over electronic devices of her choice. Undeniably, the Lost Girl is growing in strength, but she isn't entirely in command of her own powers.

Encountering the Lost Girl of Little Baguio

- The Hunters pass a car accident as they're heading toward their destination in Manila, or they suffer an accident themselves. The other party is a taxi driver who's a little addled and extremely apologetic over the incident. Unbeknownst to the man, while making his apologies, a ghostly apparition of a girl lingers over his shoulder, eyeing him with some concern. If the Hunters look straight at her, she'll react with fright and vanish immediately.
- The Lost Girl always appears on the same street corner in Little Baguio. To particularly astute onlookers, she glows a bit in the light of the streetlamps and halo of a dying afternoon sun. Most humans don't notice her presence at all, unless she's trying to convince them to give her a ride. It's entirely possible that in the window of observation the Hunters have, they may even see somebody pass through her entirely.
- With another anniversary of the Dela Pena Massacre coming up, local tabloids, radio shows, and talk shows are recounting the story for audiences in hopes of driving up viewership. The reports prominently feature interviews with taxi drivers who talk about the Lost Girl of Little Baguio.

Additional Dangers and Victims

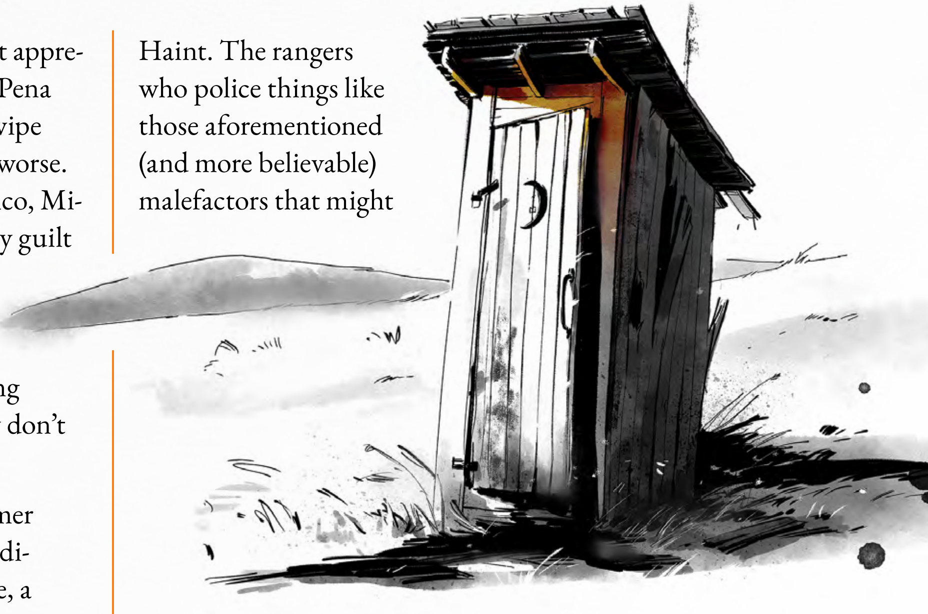
- The collective political power of Congressman Benedicto and his peers (Congressmen Acuzar, Pico, Torres, and Rodriguez) is still considerable in

Manila even after so many years. They won't appreciate people sniffing around about the Dela Pena Massacre and will do whatever they can to wipe their slates clean. Predictably, their sons are worse. If Miko or his friends (Rick Acuzar, Neal Pico, Michael Torres, and Samuel Rodriguez) feel any guilt for their crime, they actively drown it out with drugs and alcohol. Notably, Benedicto's circle acknowledges that a vengeful ghost rising from the grave is a plausible thing that happens in a city like Manila… but they don't care.

- If the Hunters poke around close to the former Dela Pena Residence or make any kind of indication that they're looking into the Massacre, a young man by the name of Basti Osamis will go out of his way to introduce himself and offer to help. He was a childhood playmate of one of the three Dela Pena girls, and witnessed the ghost of Stephanie for himself several times. While Basti is a straight up good man, he's ultimately a mortal with no grasp of the supernatural, and is more likely to get himself into trouble assisting the Hunters than anything else. That said, Stephanie will recognize him should she see him, and will be much calmer in his presence.
- Hatag Ginhawa, a grizzled Hunter who considers Little Baguio under his protection, wants to exorcise the Lost Girl. He doesn't care about her reasons, or the fact that she'd peaceably move on if someone can help her with her business. In his eyes, she's just a ghost and therefore an abomination, and must be dealt with. Hatag's many years as a Hunter have made him extremely paranoid. All other Hunters are competition, or they are enemies.

The Outhouse Haint

A dozen-plus hiker disappearances — spread over two decades, along a remote stretch of the Appalachian Trail — have local authorities saying stuff like "serial killer" or "human trafficking ring," but locals and witnesses say otherwise. They blame the Outhouse Haint. The rangers who police things like those aforementioned (and more believable) malefactors that might bedevil the trail, and who can claim to have seen the scant evidence in this matter say, "Hoax." Pictures, whether on a screen or printed out, show distortion or washout where photographers say the structure in question stood.



Witnesses consistently describe a one-person outhouse, an ancient-looking thing: paintless gray horizontal boards around gray vertical boards that form a door, which has a crescent-moon-shaped hole about eye level for a grownup; overhead. The whole thing wears a beveled roof — higher in front — with timbers and slats overhanging the walls.

One witness, who was hiking with her boyfriend, says that they saw the thing, that he said he wanted to check it out, that she said not even for a million bucks would she go inside something so creepy, and that after she finished her business on the far side of the trail… the outhouse was gone. So was the boyfriend. For an hour or so, she thought it was a mean prank. By the time she found a ranger, she could barely get her story out. Once the two made it back to where she said this "disappearing privy" had stood, she was able to show the ranger where she'd relieved herself, but neither of them could find a footprint like the one even so small a building would've left. After that, she went into shock or fugue or some such state. Rumor has it that she's no better today. Another witness claims that, right in front of him, the outhouse sank into the ground without leaving a trace. A third, whose brother vanished, refuses to say what he saw that day.

What can be said with certainty is that every hiker thought to have gone missing in that area has been male, save one; that nobody in law enforcement admits to having even the sliver of a clue; and that someone has been setting fire to portable toilets in the area.

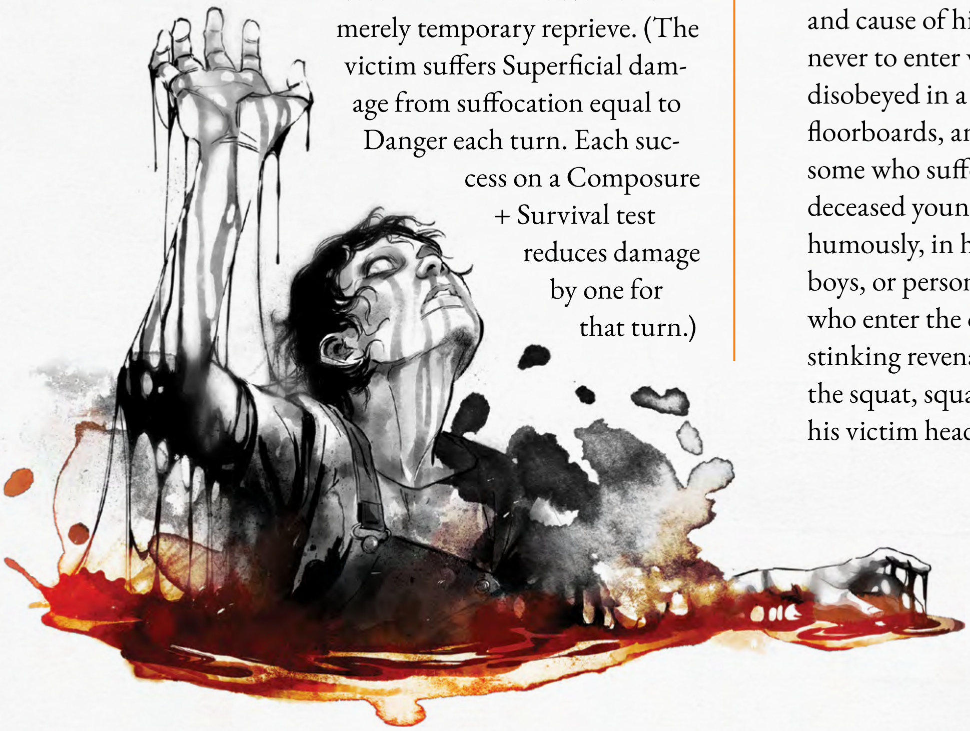
General Difficulty: 5/ 1

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 8, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 10, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl (Grapple) 9

Notes/Other Traits: Simultaneous to the manifestation of the stench, if the person is (or looks/ is dressed in attire 1930s Appalachia would have considered) male, the slick, brown-caked ghost bursts forth to supernaturally grapple the victim with force comparable to that of an anaconda or other large constrictor. Victims dragged through the privy opening, which behaves quite unlike the wood from which it seems constructed, find themselves immersed in a viscous and malodorous goo. Breathing while immersed in this substance is impossible, and the pool of slime seems impossibly large, given the dimensions of the outhouse. Panic often leads the immersed individual to flail about, in search of the surface, which cannot be reached in such an agitated state. Only by relaxing and trying to float can the surface be found, but even success at that maneuver lends a merely temporary reprieve. (The victim suffers Superficial damage from suffocation equal to Danger each turn. Each success on a Composure + Survival test reduces damage by one for that turn.) Muck drips constantly from the ceiling of the space below the hole, which seems to the victim to be several arm's-lengths overhead. The ghost will try to drag in any other male-seeming individual who immediately seeks to aid any earlier victim, but each successive attack proves somewhat weaker: Reduce the Grapple pool by two for each additional victim. Three people in the pit would be able to boost one of their number within reach of the hole, which proves pliant, no matter the size of the person passing through it. The ghost will neither molest any member of a group that escapes in this way; nor will he interfere with a woman, or someone he perceives to be a woman, who attempts immediate rescue from above. Failure on the part of any witness to act immediately allows the ghost to dematerialize the outhouse, which sinks into the ground and out of sight in less than a minute. Attempts to damage the outhouse also causes it to dematerialize in the same way. Any person entering the outhouse prevents its departure but also provokes the ghost's ire, to the limits already outlined. The ghost itself is incorporeal and Bound to the Outhouse, and only arcane means are able to separate it enough for any meaningful interaction. The Haint is also Powerless against women.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- The Outhouse Haint is the ghost of a boy, dead since the Great Depression, who manifests the site and cause of his death. Told by his abusive mother never to enter what she termed "the lady box," he disobeyed in a moment of need, fell through rotted floorboards, and drowned in the muck below. Like some who suffer physical abuse by a parent, this deceased youngster passes along that abuse — posthumously, in his case, but in deadly fashion. Men, boys, or persons whom the ghost perceives as male who enter the outhouse meet the beslimed and stinking revenant immediately, as he springs from the squat, squarish, wooden-lidded privy to drag his victim head-first into what lies beneath.

- Although the ghost has the semblance of the child who died, still stuck in the conditions of his death, he is somewhat venerable for his kind, which simply makes him potent, enraged, and implacable.
- The Outhouse Haint fears, detests, or feels debilitating shame in the presence of women — it's impossible to discern which — and in many cases leaves them alone entirely.

Appearance: The exterior of the outhouse is as described above. Like its accursed resident, the structure has tactile presence: Its constituent boards feel like weathered wood, albeit cool to the touch, even in direct sunlight. Its olfactory nature — or supernature, perhaps — is instantly mutable, however: Outside of the little building, only scents of whatever might be in bloom nearby, or smells carried there from afar on the breeze can be detected. Any person who crosses the threshold, however, immediately faces an assault that can be likened only to having fresh human feces smeared inside the nostrils.

In Stories

In life, the boy who would become the Outhouse Haint was named Caleb Kirk. His relations — aged cousins of his named Sophie and Hattie, whose father saw young Caleb enter the outhouse and heard him fall through its floor, but left him there because of some childhood spat between the two brothers over a toy — would suspect Caleb to be the antecedent of the ghost, thanks to their dad's deathbed confession. They still dwell in the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail, but well off that well-beaten path. They distrust strangers, live off-grid, and are reclusive to extremes. If a Hunter manages to win the women's trust, they'll share their father's story of his abusive mother and how she routinely directed at her sons the epithet "You little shits."

The ghost, meanwhile, has forgotten almost everything about his life — except the awful distress that compelled him to enter the forbidden outhouse (a moon carving on the exterior indicated a privy for women; a privy for men bore a carving of the sun; unisex spaces had both), the terror of his fall, the shame and disgust at what he plummeted into, and the waning of hope as no one came to his rescue. He can be exorcised, but a simpler act can undo his assaults: a woman's voice commanding him to stop misbehaving, to let those people be, or any similar language, as long as it includes his name, first or full.

Encountering the Outhouse Haint

- By dint of his longtime activities, the Outhouse Haint attracts occasional tabloid coverage, albeit hobbled by incompetent journalistic practices. A Hunter may call the cell's attention to such material, but without more substantive evidence, the likeliest outcome is ridicule or, worse, a concomitant nickname. Among national publications that have devoted ink to supernatural beings, including the Haint, is The Font, whose regular readers often get called Font-heads.
- Another Hunter's witnessed disappearance into the phantom outhouse attracts the cell members' investigation. If their inquiry starts in the hinterlands, the Hunters are likely to meet Sophie and Hattie before they find the Haint. Forewarned, the Hunters are less likely to lose one or more members to the ghost.
- On stakeout along the Appalachian Trail while pursuing some other predator, one of the Hunters tries to use or explore the outhouse, with perhaps predictable results.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- If the Hunters manage to find the woman whose boyfriend vanished, she can offer little help but inspires awful pity.
- With the idea that he's saving lives, the man who saw the outhouse vanish has been torching portable toilets in the area for years.
- The surviving brother of a victim can eventually be persuaded to describe the ghost's attack in horrid detail, but his current life is a horror story all its own, given the overwhelming phobia involving toilets that he still suffers long after the incident.

He lives in an alarmingly filthy motorhome, without plumbing, far from the Appalachian Trail, in a wilderness that he has filled with lidded buckets of his own waste. His telling the story of his brother's loss is likely to spark violence, with which he tries to punish the Hunters and, ultimately, himself.

Santan Plaza

A three- to four-hour drive away from the capital of Manila, the province of Batangas entices tourists with the natural wonder that is Taal Volcano, coffee strong enough to wake the dead, and *bulalo*, a clear broth prominently featuring beef shank and bone marrow. The heritage town of Taal offers sightseeing among the ancestral houses of old-money clans that bankrolled the Katipunan Revolution against the Spanish. Taal Basilica, the oldest Catholic Church in Asia, stands proudly on a high hill overlooking Taal itself. Locals gladly take every opportunity to tell outsiders about the Wandering Lady of Caysasay, an idol of the Virgin Mary that fishers reputedly netted from the sea. She's kept in a box under lock and chain because her caretakers know she walks through the town at night.

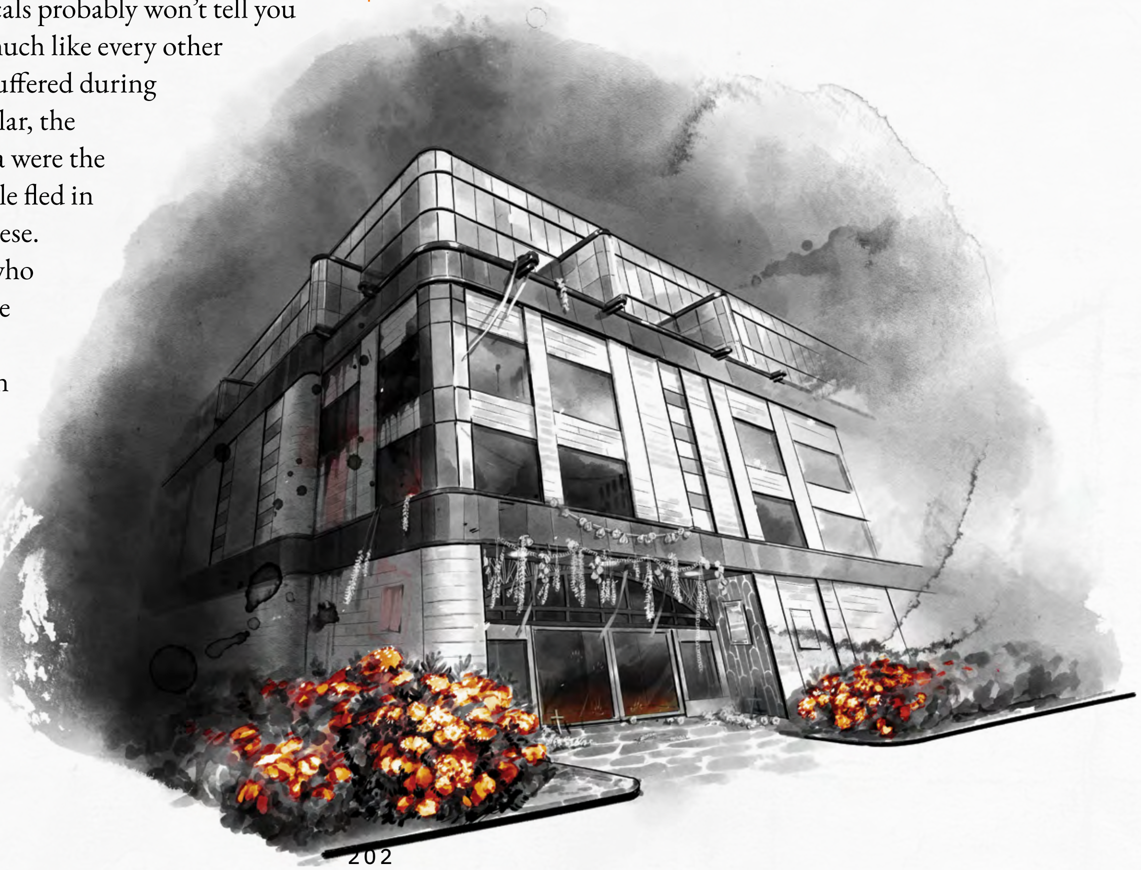
What those proud locals probably won't tell you about is that Batangas, much like every other area in the Philippines, suffered during World War II. In particular, the provinces beyond Manila were the top places to which people fled in order to escape the Japanese.

Old tobacco barons who made their fortune on the Spanish galleons, the Banaag family — then seven branches large, with the patriarch Laurentio at their head — went against the grain by fleeing up to one of the northern provinces of Luzon Island instead of holing up in Batangas.

Six of his seven children deferred to his judgment. Vincenzo, his second-eldest, vehemently disagreed. By 1945, three years into the clan's exile in the North, he yearned to return to their province and the towns they controlled. He was confident that the locals in the area were loyal, and likely as invested in surviving the war as his family. He believed that they would be able to hide from the Japanese well enough, and that being present would prevent them from losing more than they already had to looters.

On Valentine's Day of 1945, a platoon of Japanese soldiers swept through the area, brutalizing civilians on the pretense that the locals were American sympathizers. The soldiers gunned down the servants who attempted to warn Vincenzo's family before they could reach the villa. All members of Vincenzo's clan save for two of his daughters and a baby boy were killed in their home. The two women survived only because they successfully hid among the corpses in a pile by the stairwell, and stoically withstood the bayonet wounds from soldiers poking at them to see if they would cry out.

In the aftermath of the war, Laurentio fenced off his son's old property. He left the house standing after cleaning it up as best as he could: an offering to his



ill-fated offspring, he would tell people, all the way to his grave.

The ghosts of these war crimes do not rest easy, but human greed knows no bounds. In the 1970s, real estate mogul Noelle Ocana came across Vincenzo's land and saw an opportunity. The place was perfectly situated for a shopping complex. Locals who knew the story of the Batangas Massacre tried to warn the woman, and one of Vincenzo's surviving daughters also refused to give up the property to Noelle "for her own good." Such denial only encouraged Noelle further, however. Armed with their crooked lawyers and a few friends in high government positions, development company Ocana Limited gobbled up the land, paved it clean, and built the mall Santana Plaza on the site.

Ocana Limited was able to discredit the rumors of ghostly floods of blood washing over the walls and floors of the Plaza easily enough. They also succeeded in burying news of the first few disappearances that occurred after dark. But then people began to disappear within the Plaza in broad daylight, and franchise owners began threatening to pull out if the hauntings weren't resolved. Santana Plaza eats people whole now: blood tax, in place of the offering Noelle Ocana destroyed.

Santan Plaza Ghost

General Difficulty: 3/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Intimidate 8, Stealth 8

Notes/Other Traits: Like most ghosts, the shades of Santan Plaza are completely incorporeal and can employ Invisibility at will. They are able to Terrify (6) victims and at night can manipulate the Santan Plaza itself, manifesting monstrous jaws or other traps out of walls and floor (treat as brawl attacks with a pool of 8 dealing aggravated damage at +Danger) or twisting labyrinths requiring a successful Composure + Intelligence test against the current Danger to navigate before the victim is corralled into flesh-eating features, suffering Aggravated damage equal to Danger. The ghosts are Bound to the Plaza and Repelled by sampaguita garlands and garlic. (The latter does not prevent the ghosts from manipulating the mall to attack, though.)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- The ghosts of Vincenzo Banaag's family and the servants who have been massacred alongside them hunger to be recognized — but are also desperately lonely. They feel abandoned by Laurentio and the rest of the clan and have been restless ever since they watched Laurentio's people fence the property off.
- The Banaags intend to grab as many of the living as possible and have them join their lot. Ocana Limited provided them with the perfect hunting ground in Santan Plaza.
- The other ghosts in the area — those who were Vincenzo's old servants, and the newer ghosts of the people who were consumed by the shopping center — are bound by the emotional power their kidnappers have over the land. Some of them are trying to escape Vincenzo. They will try to aid mortals who are trying to save them, but their desperation to be free may hurt more than help.

Appearance: Santan Plaza is a five-story Art Deco mall with New Californian-inspired embellishments. Bushes of pink, orange and red santan flowers were planted all over the area. Their scent always fills the place and sharply picks up whenever a haunting is about to happen. The mall welcomes guests only between 11 AM to 4 PM on weekdays. Locals hang blessed sampaguita garlands and garlic over every available surface and leave statues of saints or images of the Holy Family in nooks and crannies. Most of the stores have closed "indefinitely." The occasional exorcist performs rites over the weekend, but more than a few priests have been devoured by the mall already.

Parts of the Plaza morph into a spectral hellscape after sunset. The walls, flooring, and ceiling seem to twist and shift between the mall areas that they actually are, and the bygone architecture of Vincenzo's ancestral home. Partially visible ghosts reenact portions of the Valentine's Day massacre at unpredictable intervals. The spirits of civilians who had been consumed by the mall cry for help from behind the walls, or scrawl out desperate messages in unsettling substances on windows and mirrors. Of course, none of this can be captured on any sort of permanent media, further building the horrific reputation of the place — it's just a shopping mall unless one experiences the harrowing firsthand.

In Stories

Vincenzo's spectral horde has become unfathomably desperate over the decades. Individual ghosts have flashes of humanity whenever someone manages to recognize them from old photos or from the memories of the province, but the intense emotions that bind them to their doom-site override all else. The monstrous power they exercise over the area has allowed them to possess Santan Plaza and everything in it as though the mall was a body with its own limbs and internal organs. The ghosts move walls, open the floors like mouths, manipulate security doors, and toss things around at their leisure like poltergeists.

Hunters who have gathered adequate information will be able to pick Vincenzo and his brood out for how they're dressed: With their Americano suits and their Maria Clara dresses, they will look precisely like products of the 1940s. Banaag servants all have the same liveried uniforms, and are never too far from one of their masters or mistresses.

Upward of 20 modern victims have been devoured by Santan Plaza. Some of them are poor local cops or security guards who had only wanted to do their jobs and investigate the strange noises within the mall after dark. Others are civilians who entered the Plaza to do their shopping and discovered that they couldn't escape. Still others are priests who had been sent in by the local diocese to exorcise the ghosts, and ended up joining them instead.

There is only the sliver of a possibility for a peaceful resolution, in that Vincenzo and his own may be convinced to move on. If Hunters have proof that their remaining relatives still care for them or bring a blood relative of theirs to speak directly to Vincenzo's horde, the Banaag revenants might reconcile with their living ancestors and rest. However, the likelier outcome is that Hunters will need to find the remains of Vincenzo and his family and destroy them. This will break the connection that the ghosts have to the land and banish the phantoms from the physical world. Of course, Vincenzo and his horde will use all their ghostly powers to hide their remains from Hunters.

Encountering Santan Plaza

- Some associates of the Hunters — perhaps another cell that they had worked with in the past — haven't spoken with them in over a month. Asking around points toward a job they reputedly took out in Batangas, but it was supposed to be a routine exorcism.
- En route from one investigation to another, the Hunters may end up passing Santan Plaza for a quick meal or to gather some supplies for the road. The early closing hours may potentially be a flag, and so will the almost anxious way that Plaza groundskeepers and security guards try to shoo them off. They may or may not see ghostly apparitions watching them from the windows, or a hallucination (?) of blood dripping down a nearby wall.
- Marielle Banaag, daughter to one of the two surviving women among Vincenzo Banaag's children, has been waging a one-woman war against Ocana Limited and Santan Plaza for decades. Alert Hunters will catch summaries of the ongoing legal drama over the radio, online, or on television. Tabloids tell sensational stories of hauntings in the mall, complete with lurid illustrations, which Noelle Ocana categorically dismisses as superstition and ridiculous rumors from vague "enemies" or business rivals.
- Employees of Ocana Limited are desperate to quell the financial threat that Santan Plaza poses should the truth of the building be exposed to the wider public. They've put feelers out for competent individuals familiar with the otherworldly matters of the Philippines to help them handle this issue.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- Even if they were hired by Ocana Limited, Noelle's henchmen don't have a lot of love for outsiders, especially since they know that their boss only pays people if they performed competently by her assessment. Any reputed contacts or allies from Ocana who feel that the Hunters are becoming "competition" may abandon them and break ties with Santan Plaza rather than help the Hunters out.
- Brother Fredorico "Rocky" Sunico, amateur exorcist, is the head of a dangerously naive group he calls the Phantom Questors. These self-styled psychics believe that their powers and expertise hold the key to ending the hauntings of Santan Plaza. While they have a lot of valuable information to offer the Hunters, including a great deal of local history, their recklessness and overconfidence may lead to some interesting complications should the Hunters rely on them for aid.

Will Foster, the Burning Captain

For years, various communities along the U.S. Gulf Coast have suffered what seem to be vicious arson attacks. What makes this series of crimes unusual is that most targets have been vehicles — and a few vessels — in motion. The tale told by the lone survivor among these half-dozen cases is presumed to have come from a someone in mental trauma as a result of his severe burns, given his description of the culprit.

What that witness gave authorities was a suitable description of Will Foster, owner and master of a ship that brought enslaved Africans to American shores, decades after the United States abolished their import. At the time of his voyage, the importing of enslaved people to the young United States was already outlawed. Thus, Foster destroyed the filth-caked evidence of his transgression through the most efficient means available: fire. He beached his ship on the Mobile River's banks and put it to the torch.

In life, Foster largely skirted punishment for delivering men and women into a monstrous existence as chattel. In the afterlife, he was not so fortunate, for powerful ghosts — ancestors of those whom he transferred from one form of brutal captivity to another — followed him across the Atlantic. Away from their spiritual home, those ghosts found themselves limited in what they could do to the living, but the restless dead are the very model of patience. The moment Foster died, they cursed his ghost to do their bidding until justice came for those stolen souls. The afterlife being the strange place it is, Foster spent ages in service to an arcane bureaucracy that he neither understood nor chose — until it dissolved. *Free*, he thought, but no, for still he was bound by the curse. He had to seek out any emblem of that other fallen order, the one that defended Foster's heartless enterprise in life, and treat it just as he treated his chief tool, the *Clotilda*, at her end.

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

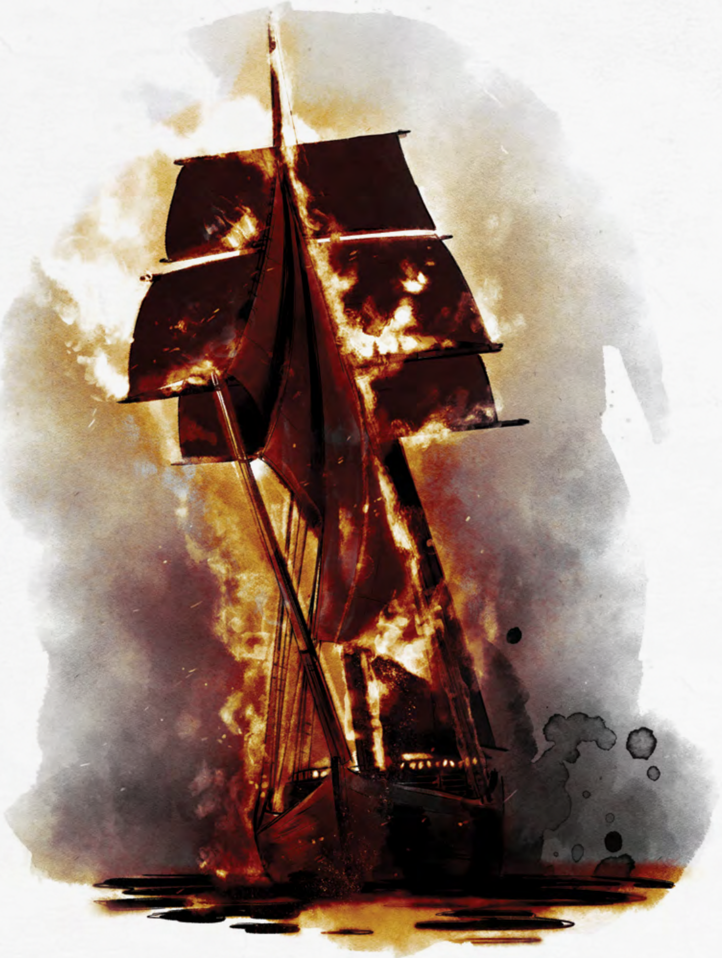
Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 4, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Driving (Ghost Ship only) 8, Intimidate 8

Notes/Other Traits:

- Dead, Will Foster can travel almost anywhere he did in life, as he fulfills the demands of his posthumous bondage. He does so aboard a ghostly version of his ship... as it burns. And so does he, until he transfers those flames to some other person or craft, whether on land or water, that bears any sigil of the Confederacy. Once he does so, he knows some brief respite, but the intransigence of history-denying Americans means he has ahead of him an untold number of hellfire nights. He is otherwise incorporeal and immune to mundane harm.
- *Repelled (Holy places).* Foster cannot encroach upon consecrated ground or any place of worship. Any cemetery that leaves a Confederate flag still flying after nightfall is susceptible to his supernatural assault, however.
- While engulfed in supernatural flames, Foster grows increasingly distressed and becomes obliv-



ious to anything other than his target or anyone impeding his destruction of it. He will ignore a Hunter, or anyone else, who calls out to him from anywhere other than along the line between the (granted, invisible) bow of the schooner and whatever he seeks to set on fire.

- Worth noting is that he targets individuals only if they are wearing reasonably well-known hate symbols or bearing one or more Confederate flags, and is Powerless against those who don't. People not bearing such emblems as they insert themselves between Foster and such a target cause him to swerve around them. Being inside the "space" of the ghostly ship causes material representations of such emblems to ignite. Thus, Foster himself can be 10 meters behind a car, for example, and cause its license plate's painted-on St. Andrew's Cross to bubble, blacken, and burn its way into the moving vehicle. At that moment, the spectral flames around Foster wink out, and he veers off to end the pursuit. The real flames burning inside the car or boat continue, however; should they reach the gas tank, an explosion occurs.
- In the case of someone wearing a hate symbol, that person is likely to see or feel the flames and attempt to doff the ignited attire. Speed is of the essence, as hellfire works on physical matter identically to thermite. Act too slowly and any adjacent flesh also ignites. Once that happens, the person typically burns until consumed, as no conventional form of fire suppressant can quench the Burning Captain's hellfire. (Damage suffered per turn is equal to current Danger.) If an extremity should ignite through direct or secondary exposure (that exploding gas tank, say), the person could be saved by severing the burning limb an inch or more away from the consuming effect.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- The Burning Captain, as Will Foster thinks of himself, wanders the Mississippi, Alabama, and northwest Florida coasts, as well as nearby roads and waterways, his ghostly eyes searching for the Stars and Bars or related symbols. With a target in sight, he can travel at an unearthly speed — much faster than the average car, truck, or pleasure boat. The few people to escape him are ones who ventured outside the precincts of Foster's time among the living.
- Foster's curse gives him an unenviable immortality, even in comparison with that of other ghosts. Because he is not tethered to a single location, exorcism is not a practical weapon against him. Perhaps the best defense available to anyone menaced by the Burning Captain would be to call him a "race traitor," but whether such a tactic would occur to anyone not somehow socially maladjusted is open to question. Even if a person were to utter such words — sincerely or not — in the ghost's presence, their effect would be to banish him for that night alone and no longer.
- Foster's goals are not his own, and are instead imposed on him by the ghosts imposing their own justice (or vengeance...) upon him. Those spirits may be dealt with on their own, should the

Hunters discover an avenue by which to interact with them. But do they want to?

Appearance: Abroad only by night, Foster is unrecognizable in advance of an attack. He travels atop the burning bridge of the *Clotilda*, the rest of his spectral schooner invisible to mortal eyes. Foster, the ship's wheel before him, and the deck around him all look like sculptures made of live, glowing embers, licked by modest flames. On clear nights he and the ship trail "smoke" that has no scent and deposits no soot. Seen in one's rearview mirror, he might be mistaken for an ill-advised (because *terrifying*) promotional display riding atop a semi-cab. Once he has ignited the targeted emblem (or emblems), any fiery aspect to him vanishes, and for a moment he takes on the semblance he had in life: that of a clean-shaven white male with heavy sideburns, dressed in handmade cotton clothing and a broad-brimmed hat, and shod in knee-high leather boots. Seconds later, he and the seemingly levitating ship's bridge beneath his feet disappear. He leaves behind only the fires he starts.

In Stories

If addressed by an impeding person, Foster always answers with the same words, no matter the person's question or warning: "I am the Burning Captain." The emphasis changes with his level of frustration, however. Once Foster manages to transfer the tormenting hellfire elsewhere, anyone Foster would have replied to in life (i.e., an adult white male; he ignores others) will have less than a minute to ask him why he's doing what he's doing. Although his initial response is likeliest to be … "I am the Burning Captain," he'll amplify upon that phrase to say that he acts under compulsion until justice comes to those whom he wronged. If asked again who he is, he'll whisper, "Will Foster" — and then vanish.

Encountering the Burning Captain

- The Font, or some similar tabloid, publishes a front-page story headlined BILLIONAIRE THAD THURBER STALKED BY ARSONIST BECAUSE OF DREAM PROJECT. The report, albeit rife with errors and fabrications, details several real fires that have occurred on the set of an epic Civil War movie bankrolled by Thurber, a famed media mogul descended from a Confederate general. His own car — thanks to its Confederate-commemorative plate — is identified as the most recent arson target, though Thurber himself remains unharmed. A sidebar includes a child extra's description of the ghost, but the reporter dismisses this explanation (despite exploitatively including it).
- Through hunter channels, the cell learns of colleagues in the Gulf Coast area who seek help in dealing with an Unusual Threat that's baffling them. Upon traveling there, the cell members meet a small, local org that began as a white-supremacist militia. Its members (one of whom was Foster's lone survivor, thanks to being splashed with holy water) look askance at any member of the arriving cell who doesn't meet their membership criteria, and they make remarks and wear clothing that air their attitudes quite clearly. If the visitors withdraw their offer to help, the hunters who invited them become verbally abusive and threatening. As the visiting cell returns home, the local hunters attack its members — only to be attacked, in turn, by the ghost.
- While traveling home from a hunt along a route that intersects Foster's "shipping lanes," the cell has a vehicle undergo terminal breakdown. The Hunters rent a car or van whose license plate incorporates a Confederate battle flag. After sundown, supernatural strife ensues.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- As a narrative device, the Burning Captain is a test of the cell's morality. How do they respond to the supernatural judgment of "victims" who all but invite that judgment upon themselves through their callous attitudes? Is the way for the Hunters to solve this supernatural crisis by simply walking away from it? Or does something more personal prompt them into a more nuanced resolution?

Fair Folk and Stranger Things

Johnny Sweets, the Everloved1

Everyone always wants to talk about the one who got away, but what about the ones you're glad you got away from? Take this guy I met on one of the apps a few weeks back. "Sweets." Name's a little corny and probably not real, but he seems nice enough. Into the same kind of stuff I am, but not so much that it's like I'm gonna be dating my reflection. We were gonna have words about his lack of appreciation for cats, for one. Plus he's hot. Like, conjured right out of my daydreams and made in a lab hot: sexy eyes, cheekbones for days, soft in the right places, and just enough stubble that I'm already wondering what it's gonna feel like… but anyway, not the point.

The point is, we go out twice and he's Mr. Perfect. Hilarious, good listener, just as hot in person. Took me to a Vietnamese place I'd never heard of that served *the* best food I've ever had. Perfect gentleman, too — didn't try to jump in my pants or anything. So by the time he asks me back to his place, I am completely melting and ready to have a great night. Except you know how I'm always saying I think I'm a little psychic or have spidey sense or something? The minute I see the front door of his townhouse, I get the worst vibes ever. Like somebody walked on my grave, just got to the liquor store, and it's being robbed, run-for-the-door kinda vibes. Major dilemma. Part of me is thinking, "This is gonna be the best night of your life," and the other part is thinking about the shower scene from *Psycho*.

So I bail. Hot or not, I'm not trying to end up on *City Murder Files* or whatever. I tell him I have a headache, maybe we can reschedule, all that good stuff. And for one second, I swear, his face went different. Like all the stuff was in the same place, but it didn't hit the same way. Reminded me of those pictures where if you look one way it's a young girl but the other it's an old witch. Creepy. Anyway, the minute I saw that, I spun on my heels and got the heck out of there. Deleted my account on that app as soon as I got home. Tried to report him first, even though there's no category for "face went wrong," but the account was already closed. And that, right there, is why I hate online dating.

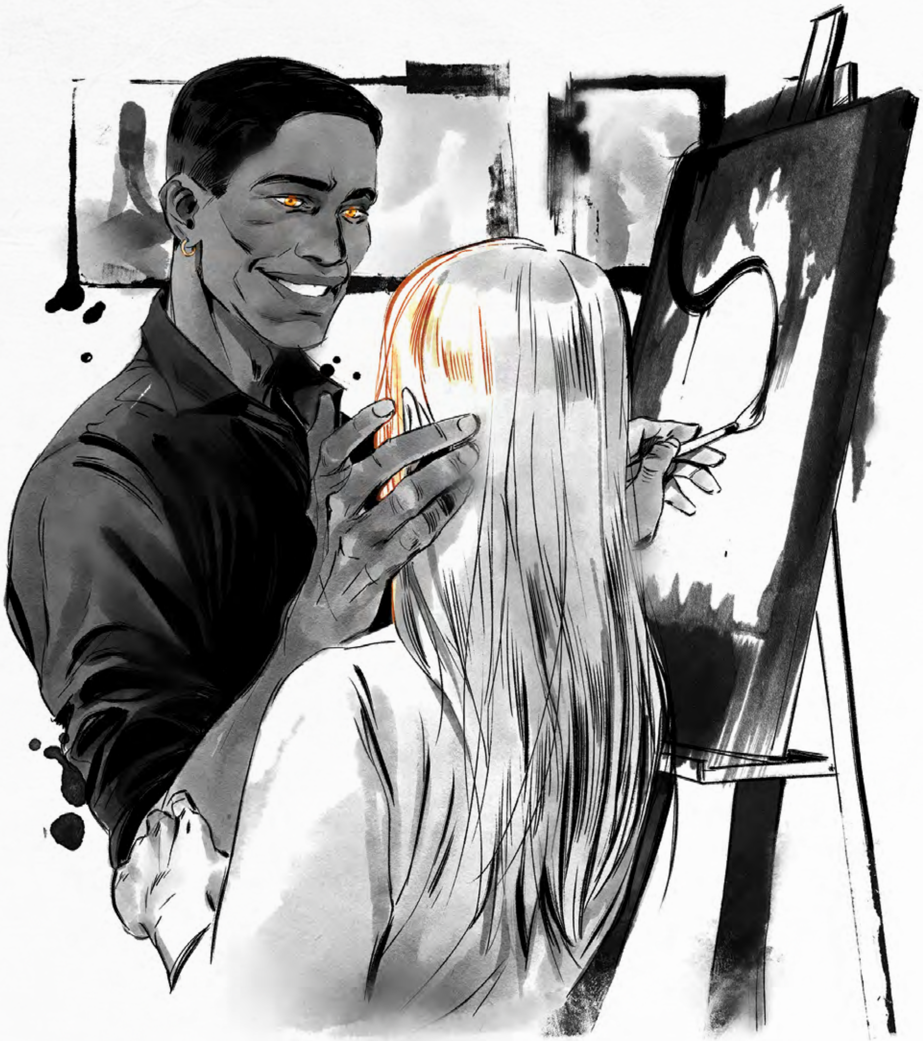
General Difficulty: 4/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 8, Insight (Sense Desire) 9, Subterfuge 8

Notes/Other Traits: Sweets can sense a human's desires and reshape himself slightly to fit them. He can also turn people into two-dimensional pictures of themselves, in a medium and on a surface of his choosing. Victims aware of the ability can resist the process with a successful Resolve + Occult test against a Difficulty equal to current Danger, but Sweets can repeat the attempt each turn as long as he is able to keep his attention on the victim. Once successful, the process is instant. While in that state, they perceive everything happening in their environment but are unable to move or take action. Sweets can reform the real, three-dimensional version of the person from the picture at will, but each time he does, the real version becomes a bit less distinct. Physically they seem fuzzy



around the edges, and mentally and emotionally they become softer: Things they were passionate about they still care about, but less, their memories lose detail, etc. (Victims lose a point in all Attributes of a single category each time this happens. This cannot take an Attribute below one.) Sweets views this as an unfortunate side effect of the work he does and so rarely takes exhibits (read: people) down from his collection. Sweets is also a capable hand-to-hand fighter — fast and precise in his movements, he makes an ass-kicking look like a dance and rarely ends up on the losing side. His supernatural body also makes him Resilient, and on a successful Insight test he is able to employ Charm (6) on the subject.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Sweets wants to meet a human who will make him believe in love and stop his search for the perfect mate. He feels love will make him complete and give him a better understanding of humanity. He's been at this for years, but the digital world allows him to explore relationships with many more people in a much shorter timeframe than before.
- While he is always inevitably disappointed by the humanity of his prospects, he believes the journey is more important than the destination, and imprisons his erstwhile dates as a living art gallery of his attempts to find a suitable romantic partner. He places simulacrums he calls "fetches" in the routine of his victims' mortal lives so as not to earn any unwanted attention from human authorities.
- Sweets won't give away or allow harm to come to any part of his collection, but will occasionally go on dates with prospects he's not interested in so that he can turn them over to paying, otherworldly patrons to support his luxury lifestyle.

Appearance: Sweets is a strikingly attractive man with a symmetrical face, long eyelashes, and chiseled cheekbones, but his truly remarkable feature is his smile. At first glance, it shows a deep warmth (and exposes a dimple on the right side of his face), but look long enough and it becomes almost predatory, the proverbial cat who swallowed the canary. He dresses almost as if to blunt the impact of his face, in plain black or brown slacks and unremarkable button-down shirts, but his sinuous movements make him look as if he is about to break into an alluringly smooth dance move or choreographed fight sequence.

In Stories

Johnny Sweets has searched obsessively for love for a long time, collecting potential lovers and transforming them into the portraits that line the walls of his expensive townhouse. Each person had something he personally found *not quite right* about them. After all, if they had been perfect, he would have stopped collecting and enjoyed a life of true love underneath the watchful eyes of all who came before. But they haven't been perfect, so his search continues. To help him learn from his mistakes, each portrait showcases the subject in a moment of true beauty, while the backdrop features a grotesque representation of the reason he couldn't truly love them, everything from a close-up on a physical imperfection to the cover of a book they enjoyed that he found unconscionable to a spray of carnations from their dining-room table because *carnations smell revolting*.

In previous eras, Sweets has tried many different types of courting, from debutante balls to arranged marriages, but now he has especially taken to online dating, as the swipe-left-swipe-right apps almost seem to mirror the work he's done in his gallery of spurned lovers. Adapting quickly, he has settled into a routine as Everloved1, creating accounts on every major dating site. When someone (of any or no gender) catches his eye, he takes them on three dates, the first to see if he's interested, the second to make them interested in him (using his ability to make himself more appealing in response to human desire), and the third to walk off together into the sunset for a lifetime of love. For the first two, he prides himself on creating perfect dates and never repeating a location. His potential perfect mate deserves no less! On the third date, he invites them back to his townhouse, and things inevitably go awry.

Sweets convinces himself that he is in love at the beginning of each third date, but the combination of the portraits on the wall (which are disturbing to the human eye) and the intensity of his romantic desire turns off potential prospects. With his illusions of love shattered, he quickly goes from charming to nasty. Overpowering his date with an unexpected quickness, he restrains them and interrogates them at length to try to determine how they failed him and what he should do better next time while painting the backdrop of his next work of art. He uses their answers to shape that backdrop into a form that he believes suits their flaws and creates a fetch to replace them, then traps them in the painting and hangs it on his wall. After a day of self-loathing and disappointment, Sweets is inevitably back on the dating scene. This quick turnaround, which is much different than the long pursuits of earlier eras, has made his work a bit sloppy. While the portraits are still perfect, the fetches are recognizably different from the original to those who know the person well.

Sweets would prefer it if no one knew who he was; over time he's learned that it provokes far fewer questions that way. A Hunter cell, though, may discover him in any number of ways. They may be asked to investigate the odd behavior of one of his victims, especially if that victim has been swindled by Melinda Bal, a con artist who uses Sweets' fetches as her personal bank. She believes he's drugging his victims, and her modus operandi is to lend a sympathetic ear, extend an overture of friendship… and then abscond with their credit cards and other petty valuables. Melinda is currently under investigation by multiple local authorities and could lead Hunters back to Sweets. (Melinda is unaware of the supernatural aspect of what Sweets is doing; she once went on a date with him and found him seductive, though he declined to ask her out again. She knows his login credentials for one of his dating apps and identifies her new victims by secretly reading their conversations.)

Hunters may also learn of a series of complaints against Sweets' online persona, Everloved1, by those he rubbed the wrong way. While Sweets is usually quite charming, he loses interest once a prospect is no longer a potential "true love" for him. Occasionally, he takes those failing prospects to his townhouse regardless, subduing them and selling them to "interested parties" for money, but often he simply lets his veneer slip — an unsettling experience. Finally, Sweets is quite striking and spends a lot of time out on dates; the right Hunter cell could run across him accidentally and suspect that there is something more to him than a casual date suggests.

Encountering Sweets

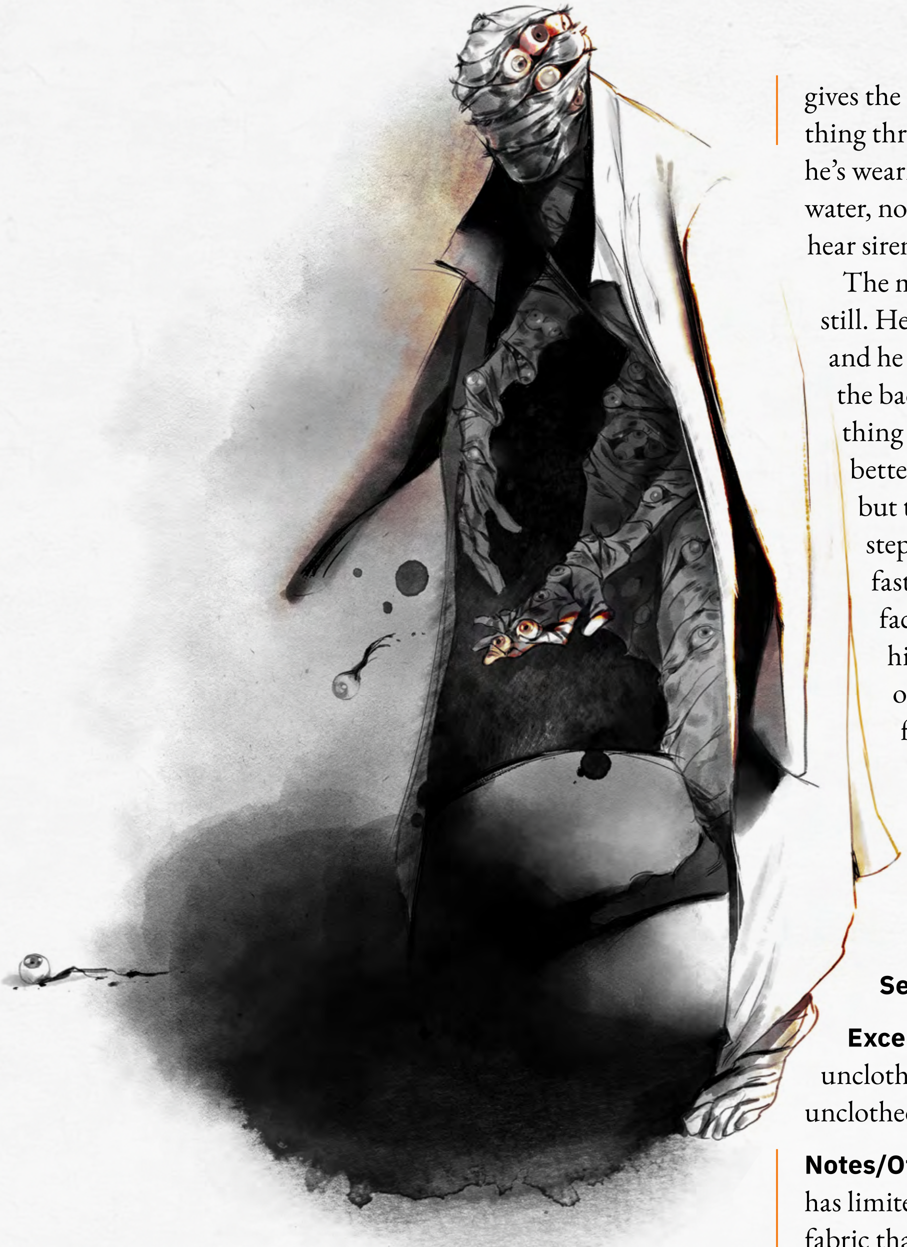
- One of Sweets' dates sends his friend a text: "This place is weird man," then doesn't come home, becoming Sweets' latest victim. The friend raises the alarm, reporting that the missing person was on a date with Everloved1, but while authorities are taking the report, the date returns on the arm of Melinda Bal, who claims, when asked, to be the Everloved1 in question. The friend is suspicious; the returning date barely seems to remember who he is, and Melinda doesn't match the photo in Everloved1's profile. Still, with no missing person, there's nothing the authorities can do. The Hunters are either called in by the authorities, alerted that something seems off by the friend, or contracted as private investigators by the dating service, which has received several reports regarding Everloved1 in the past and considers action necessary.
- Outside of his townhouse, it's nearly impossible to get Sweets alone with all of his dates around, but conversations with him will reveal a smooth talker who has a well-scripted answer to any question Hunters might pose, unless it has something to do with love or dating, at which point Sweets will begin to wax poetic about love in general and/ or his current prospect. He's charming and doesn't seem dangerous in the least, though if Hunters compare notes after the conversation, they may realize that he looked slightly different to each of them.
- Entering the townhouse while Sweets is out triggers a silent alarm that will bring him back to the townhouse within 30 minutes. Exploring the townhouse reveals that most of it now serves as a portrait gallery of the creepy art Sweets has been making — beautiful figures against horrific backdrops — with the exception of a lush honeymoon suite style bedroom and a large art studio. Any recent works on display can be tied back to a person who recently went on a date with Everloved1 and is either no longer quite themselves and/ or was a Melinda Bal con victim.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- If players are still in the townhome when Sweets returns (or if they enter while he is in the house), he will be furious with them for ruining his date night and immediately attack whomever is closest. He is an aggressive fighter, used to one-on-one odds but still able to hold his own. If suddenly outnumbered or losing the fight, he may re-constitute one of his previous victims, telling them that if he is killed they will never go free. Victims can then choose to either flee or help Sweets fight the Hunters.
- If he has become aware of their pursuit of him, Sweets attacks to disable the Hunters and move them toward his studio, where he has blank canvases ready to capture them. This action also protects his previous victims from harm. If Hunters take any action toward harming a canvas, Sweets offers to make a deal, but only if he gets to walk away with his favorite few painting victims. If dying and given the option, convincing him to free his victims will be a final challenge, as he very mistakenly believes that they would never want to live away from him.
- Once Sweets is either defeated or chased off, Hunters will not be able to free previous victims, including any trapped Hunters, but perhaps a fraught cooperation with a resourceful org may be able to help them figure out a way to set the victims free.

The Eye Thief

A buddy of mine, another Hunter, told me about the Eye Thief. That was his name for this thing, and he learned more about it than he ever wanted to. He came across it one night, on his city rounds. At first he thought he'd stumbled onto a date gone bad: You know, sounds of pleading coming from behind a building. He takes a look, sees what seems to be a guy pressing somebody against a wall, face to face. My friend rushes over, grabs the attacker by the coat collar, drags the guy away from a woman, who screams and raises both hands to her head. She yells, "What did you



do?" For a second, my friend thinks she's talking to him. She screams again, though, and says, "What's wrong with my eye?" At first he thinks this guy has… I don't know, bitten her eye, maybe?

Then he looks at the attacker, and he knows better, because the attacker has no mouth. No nose, either. The skin is… seamed, or grooved. Like a mummy, he said, but no bandages. Just skin, with these creases that cover the whole head. And in the creases are eyes. Way too many eyes. He's so shocked at the sight of this thing that he lets go — and it bolts. He tells this woman, who's sliding down the wall as she cradles her head, "Stay here! I'll get help!" He lights out after this monstrosity, pulls a gun and a burner phone, calls 911, and gives the operator her location. Then he's chasing the thing through the park, toward the pond. It's cold, so he's wearing gloves and just tosses the burner into the water, no fear of it ever tracing back to him. He can't hear sirens yet, so he shoots at the thing, but he misses.

The monster stops, right under a light, and stands still. He keeps running so he can get a better shot, and he sees, like, half a dozen eyes move around to the back of its head. He shoots again, and the damn thing jerks clear of the bullet! He figures it must see better than he can, so he circles it for the next shot, but the eyes keep moving with him, and it sidesteps that bullet, too. And then… it's on him. Too fast to avoid, it pins his gun hand and grabs his face. And he feels something happen to his eye, his left eye. Next thing he knows, he's sitting on the ground, his gun is gone, and he can see from his right eye only.

After that, things got really bad for my friend.

General Difficulty: 5/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 2, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics (Dodge, when unclothed) 10, Brawl (Grapple) 8, Awareness (When unclothed, vision only) 10,

Notes/Other Traits: When clothed, the Eye Thief has limited capabilities, as it cannot see through any fabric that would thwart normal human vision. Thus, its preference is for coats that it can shed fast. Because it cannot purchase any attire, it sometimes steals such articles from its victim after taking an eye. Unclothed, the Eye Thief's vision encompasses everything around it, except directly beneath its feet. The creature can reposition eyes to feet and/or toes, but it never stands or walks atop its "own" open eyes. In this posture, however, it can climb utility-pole anchor wires and run along power lines at speeds comparable to what Olympic sprinters can achieve on the ground. With eyes at its fingertips or feet, the Eye Thief can peer around corners. Except for its encased eyes, every such organ it uses has so-called fighter-pilot vision (20/10 or better), regardless of the original owner's eyesight. The Eye Thief also has Rush and Regenerate (1).

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- As its nickname suggests, the Eye Thief steals human eyes from living victims. Its own form is generally human in outline, but it's covered with a single pair of eyelids that spirals from the crown of its head, out each arm and back, around its torso, and along one leg, then the other. Stolen eyes inhabit this long, lone, gruesome sulcus and move about it in swift, preternatural ways.
- The Eye Thief exhibits a preference for victims who have received transplanted organs or transfused blood, the latter of which renders many Hunters vulnerable. It can take organs from others, but those victims never experience the unwanted remote viewing; their stolen eyes wither and are ejected from the creature's body in a week or so.
- The Eye Thief is... hungry? Its lack of other sensory organs corresponds to the Eye Thief's absence of hearing or taste, but its beyond-human vision and sense of touch more than compensate in its stalking of prey. Worse, the nocturnal creature's victims suffer terrible dreams — soundless ones — in which they witness its subsequent activities through their stolen organs.

Appearance: This humanoid predator is covered by a single fleshy channel wherein its ill-gotten eyes race about freely. At any given moment, the Eye Thief possesses several dozen of these organs. One taken from an individual who has never received any transplant or transfusion develops a caul, as if afflicted by cataract, within a day. When performing acts that defy the abilities of mere humans, the creature moves multiple eyes to the appropriate portion of its anatomy. Its grotesque exterior means the Eye Thief must travel the streets in some concealing article/s of clothing, often an overcoat and brimmed hat, but sometimes a kaftan and taqiyah or kufi.

In Stories

After being railroaded into the untender care of a for-profit United States prison and terribly wounded there by a fellow prisoner, Qadir Mannah found himself a "volunteer" in a grossly illicit pharmaceutical trial. The drug being tested was intended to reduce rejection of transplanted tissues. Instead, it mutated the subject overnight, whereafter he blinded his captors and fled the facility.

Since then, this once kind and generous man has devolved into a thing of cunning and want. The Eye Thief sleeps by day, awakens hungry for the eye of another, and only reluctantly returns to slumber in some derelict home or disused office tower if it fails at its quest.

Any contact between the Eye Thief's seamed hide and the occupied orbit of a human face lets the creature extract whatever occupies that cavity. Weirdly, this procedure is painless for the victim. Once, the creature stole a prosthesis, an outcome that shows how single-minded the commission of that act renders the Eye Thief.

Particularly if it is clothed, the Eye Thief is never more vulnerable than during such a theft. For the victim, any affected optic nerve retreats in a way that makes medical personnel skeptical that an organ ever existed (much less functioned) at its terminus. The dreams that afflict victims, although silent, are extraordinarily vivid; they occur only if the victim is already asleep when the creature begins its nightly prowl. Unless a victim is awakened by someone else or has experience with lucid dreaming, the sleeper becomes locked into remotely witnessing the creature's peregrinations, in real time, until it goes to sleep itself.

Note that the Eye Thief is neither bulletproof, nor is it resistant to stabbing or blunt trauma; it relies upon speed, agility, and an incomparable situational awareness to avoid such damage. Should it receive damage from, say, a scatter gun, every stolen eye blinded by the weapon would free a corresponding victim from the nightmarish link. Unless entirely incinerated or crushed, the Eye Thief will, in mere days, regrow any extremity (even its head) lost to impact, gunshot, cutting, burning, or other violence. If cut in two, its halves will find each other and try to recombine; if half the creature is destroyed, the surviving half becomes quiescent for weeks while it heals.

Encountering the Eye Thief

- Certain characteristics of the Eye Thief's predations may initially seem like vampire attacks, especially if the Hunters miss key details, or they're simply absent. Hunters who inadequately investigate and prepare can easily find themselves mismatched with what they think is one of the fast-and-agile undead that instead turns out to be something wholly other.
- Just as a broken clock is right twice a day, tabloids sometimes publish true, if sensationalized, details about monsters. Hunters who use these sources must discern, amid much dross, recurring stories that bear such headlines as ORGAN THIEVES' CRIMES REVEALED THROUGH BAD DREAMS and ALIENS GATHER HUMAN EYEBALLS TO MAKE HIVE MIND.
- On the trail of some other creature, one of the Hunters who has received a blood transfusion or organ replacement falls prey to the Eye Thief. If it escapes with the Hunter's eye, the link to its later depredations erode the victim's effectiveness, dependability, and — eventually — will to live, in that order.

Additional Dangers and Victims

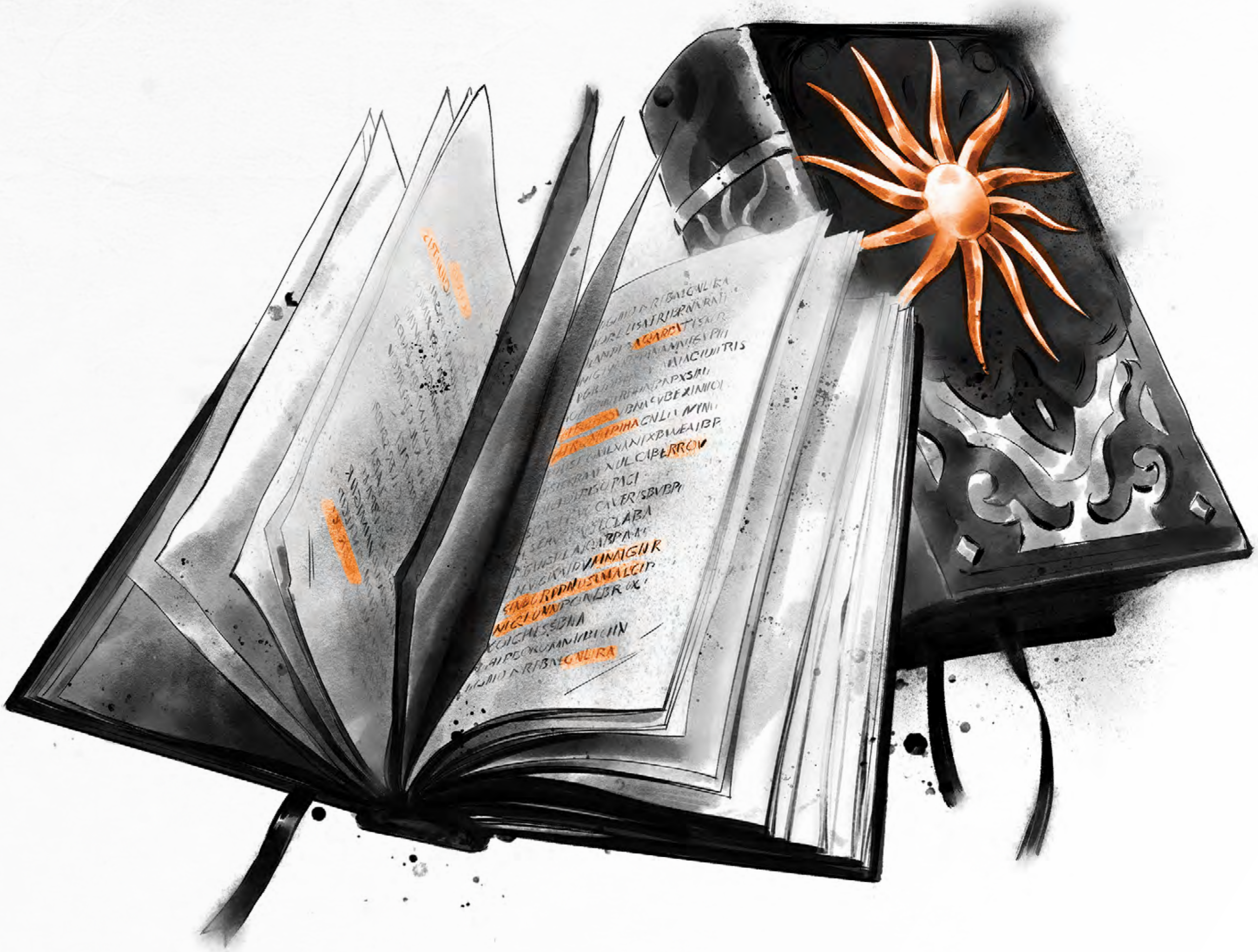
- Through the Hunter grapevine, the cell hears of a colleague who is suffering what seem to be remote viewings of a monster's subsequent activities. If they can figure out how to exploit the nightmares, they get gradual clues as to the Eye Thief's current location — or, rather, hunting grounds — which are most likely to be in a different time zone, somewhere east of the group, given the ways the link takes hold.
- Qadir Mannah isn't the only test subject for the experimental pharmaceutical run by the for-profit prison chain. Another prison in another part of the country (but owned by the same private corrections company) has very recently performed a similar chemical trial and obtained exactly the same result. The Hunters may learn of this after they bring an end to the Eye Thief's threat, or the additional victims' reports may complicate the investigation they're doing into "their" local Eye Thief.
- The Eye Thief has no understanding of the societies of supernatural creatures that call the night home, and may unwittingly prey on one of them. In the aftermath (whether or not the attack was successful, that supernatural individual might retain the Hunter cell, intending to pit the creature and the Hunters against one another... and to deal with the weakened survivor in the aftermath.

Darksome Anatomyes /The Dark Sum & Atomies

"Such a curious and elusive book." With those words, one antiquarian (now deceased) perfectly described and glibly understated the true nature of Darksome Anatomyes, a work coeval to Andreas Vesalius's 1543 magnum opus, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*. Whereas Vesalius pioneered human anatomy in the Fabrica, however, the creators of *Darksome Anatomyes* did the same for supernatural entities.

Long attributed to an English "physician" named Matthias Sciveleng, *Darksome Anatomyes* is actually a collaboration between him and his protégée, Azzura Franco. She rendered the book's extraordinary illustrations and based them upon her mentor's sorcerous vivisections of vampires, werewolves, and things that tonight lack names. More importantly, Franco created in secret the work's sole copy, whose somewhat variant title is *The Dark Sum & Atomies*. Furthermore, she used her teacher in a "proof of concept" spellcasting that bound his consciousness to *Darksome Anatomyes*. After the success of that demanding effort, and given Franco's recognition of her ineluctable decline and death from syphilis, she placed her own consciousness into *The Dark Sum*.

Any complete summary of these two books' storied existence would require a book all its own. Nowadays, the pair demonstrates peculiar "habits". The Franco



book tends to materialize in a library or rare bookstore and linger until one of two things occurs. Either it attracts a potential reader, or the Sciveleng book appears in the same collection — seemingly in pursuit. The Franco vanishes upon the Sciveleng's arrival nearby; before the latter can magically jump to the former's new location, it must attract a potential reader of its own. As that being reaches for the Sciveleng, it moves to the location of the Franco before that book's departure. If that same being can find the Sciveleng before midnight at their location, the book allows itself to be handled. The Sciveleng answers its readers' most pressing question about any supernatural being — and exacts a price for that knowledge. At the first stroke of midnight after imparting its wisdom, *Darksome Anatomyes* again vanishes to continue chasing *The Dark Sum*.

In its wake, the newly informed reader of the Sciveleng gradually demonstrates that some things are best left unknown.

Notes/Other Traits: Neither *Darksome Anatomyes* nor *The Dark Sum & Atomies* will disappear while being watched. In libraries, where open-backed shelves occur, the books will ease deeper into the shelf, as if pulled by someone unseen on the next aisle. When stored flat or on a bookstand, the stand collapses or the supporting furniture buckles; the fleeing book "falls" out of sight before translocating itself elsewhere.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Alongside its supernatural revelation, *Darksome Anatomyes* bestows its reader some of Matthias Sciveleng's enduring curiosity, which first manifests as a desire to better understand some supernatural creature, though never to a suicidal degree. For a Hunter, what blossoms is an eagerness for the hunt which outstrips that of anyone else in the cell. The corpse of any quarry — regardless of its being killed by the cell or by someone or something else

— conjures an overwhelming urge for the accursed Hunter to collect "trophies." Between hunts, the affected individual examines these specimens chemically, microscopically, and however else information can be gleaned from them. During hunts, the accursed person carries the most portable among these bits of flesh and/or bone, palpates them, and eventually tastes them, regardless of the audience for such behavior. Every time the Hunter is faced with an opportunity to collect a sample from a creature they must do so unless they spend a point of Willpower to resist. Doing so also prevents them from regaining Willpower until a sample of said creature has been collected.

- Unless this curse is removed within a year and a day of taking effect, the accursed person will subdue, restrain, and vivisect every animate thing within reach. A day without such a subject forces the individual into self-vivisection. If incarcerated but not restrained, accursed individuals use any means necessary to delve their own flesh — down to the bone. Ultimately, only physical restraint can prevent Sciveleng-afflicted beings from mutilating themselves to death. (The Storyteller must decide whether they take control of the character or if the player can be trusted to have the character act in accordance with the curse. As ever, in such a situation involving self-harm, recall the agreement the troupe has made regarding boundaries and respectful play. See the Appendix starting on p. 274 for specific calibration techniques.)
- The only proven remedy for exposure to the Sciveleng volume comes via the Franco volume. If opened when no one is currently suffering the curse, *The Dark Sum* has its normal appearance, as detailed below. Should someone in need manage to corral the peripatetic Franco book, wherever it's opened, it offers the reader a costly cure: the willing excision and incineration of a body part (eyeball, earlobe, hand, or foot, at minimum) by a person other than the accursed.
- The choice of body part is always specified in the text, as the Franco consciousness of the book is amassing a sort of sacrificial Frankenstein for purposes of its own.

Appearance: Both books are manuscripts in the bibliopegistic sense, as all their contents are hand-rendered, rather than printed. Each is a vellum-bound quarto (roughly 11 inches tall, 9 inches wide, and 3 inches deep) with unpaginated sheets of rag paper. The ink in both is black, despite being made with generous amounts of blood from the sorcerer whose consciousness resides in the respective volume. Neither cover bears any title, but each is ornately incised and spine-embossed with a metallic sunburst — silver for the Sciveleng, gold for the Franco. Only the half-title and full-title pages of each book are not rendered in code; those four pages, each written in ornate English script, identify the respective volume, and Sciveleng's entire name appears on each full-title page. Only *The Dark Sum* includes Franco's name to identify her as illustrator. Thereafter, the text in each book uses Roman numerals in a format known as scriptio continua — no spaces between words — to communicate (or, mostly, not) its arcane secrets. Both books are surprisingly heavy, and both smell of ancient leather.

In Stories

Although the Franco and Sciveleng books are likeliest to materialize where an archivist, a sorcerer, a necromancer, or an epopt of some sort might be, they've played their centuries-long game in thrift stores, Hollywood prop houses, and even the waiting room of a doctor's office. Unless a Hunter specializes in grimoires, the volumes are too rare and fleeting to offer much of a reference trail — and the curse only erodes their history.

Encountering the Volumes

- Members of a cell are present for the disappearance of the Franco book in a setting where they know they are alone. Shortly thereafter, they are present as the Sciveleng volume makes its appearance, exactly where the other book vanished. Before they can approach the thing, another interested individual steps into view to take possession of the book, and vice versa.

- The cell's sharpest researcher notices, in a nationally circulated literary publication, an ad that seeks anyone who might have primary documents or specialized knowledge about descendants of the notable 16th-century courtesan Veronica Franco — in particular, a perhaps unrecorded daughter named Azzura. Thereafter, it's just a matter of time....
- A scanned page from Sciveleng has "haunted" the Internet since the 1990s, but no one alive who has seen it there grasps its origins. Meanwhile, via the dark web, anonymous parties are offering "cover photos of both M. Skiveling/ A. Franco books" for a fortune in cryptocurrency.

Additional Dangers and Victims

- The rival volumes are uncommon in that they are not themselves the obvious threat in most cases. Rather, the sorts of disturbed individuals who pursue them may present the Hunters with a number of immediate situational quandaries. And the Hunters' usual methods of observation and preparation will need to be adjusted for perhaps a series of unrelated quarry until the "vector" of the rival grimoires is discovered.
- On the trail of a quarry with an interest in counterfeiting art, the Hunters find horribly mutilated bodies in her wake. The violence is uncharacteristic and shocking in nature — all the more because the victims are the quarry's confidantes and clients. Worse, her next stop is a crowded gallery opening. If they survive the "party," the Hunters may be able to identify similar killing sprees from past years and correlate such events with the patterns etched onto the covers of the books. Thus, they might predict where the pair will materialize next.
- The volumes themselves might be discovered during an investigation of some other dangerous supernatural entity, forcing the Hunters to prioritize which threat receives their immediate attention. Worse, the supernatural the cell is stalking might not realize what they have on their hands and be subject to the gruesome urges imparted by the books in addition to their own monstrous predilections. ■

Chapter Seven:

RIVAL ORGANIZATIONS

Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.

— Primo Levi

From the Hunter perspective, orgs are at least rivals, and in many cases, they are legitimate enemies, given that they have priorities other than monster-hunting that can put them into direct conflict with one's cell. One of the primary differences between orgs and cells is that cells of Hunters exist to oppose monsters, while many orgs seek to use monsters for their own ends. For example, if all vampires ceased to exist, SAD would be defunded and shut down, and SAD doesn't want that. By contrast, a cell of Hunters wants to eliminate (or otherwise deal with) the vampires in question and get back to their lives.

As well, most members of orgs don't have Drives — hunters who belong to orgs take orders from or otherwise follow org directive.

This makes for a complex relationship among creeds, cells, and orgs. Orgs aren't averse to using cells of Hunters to do their jobs, such as through subcontracting them to handle high-risk operations or even positioning them as canaries in a coal mine, to gain more info about suspected supernatural targets without risking org assets themselves. All but the most naive cells are aware of this, however, and fully understand that the orgs are generally in it for themselves, but that they have benefits — information and resources being primary — that can be of immediate value to creed-following Hunters.

Organization Types

In general, *organization type* refers to the way the organization is funded, chartered, or otherwise operates. So, for example, Special Affairs Division is a specific *organization*, and its *organization type* is a Governmental agency.

The org types aren't generally societal or as culturally supportive as the creeds. A BOPE-RJ agent doesn't necessarily care that they're part of the Governmental org type, as opposed to a Martial-creed Hunter who has a loose outlook in common with other Martial-creed Hunters.

Academic

Just think of the value this could add to our archives!

Some organizations pursue information as its own end. The world may be tormented by the occult, but that very word, "occult," means there's a mystery to discover and a secret to discern.

Information is either a currency or a tool to these hunters, and Academic orgs hoard both forms of information with great voracity. Orgs of this type are most notable for often being reluctant to use these currencies or tools, for whatever reason, however. Whether it's the temptation to learn just one more secret, the accumulation of knowledge "for its own protection," or an underlying lack of confidence that what they know is enough, Academic hunters perform the fewest actual hunts with the intent of taking down the monster. Some are like wildlife researchers, refusing to allow their own emotions to prompt them to interfere. Some are fascinated by the monsters themselves, seeking to understand everything they can about these secret creatures and the societies to which they belong. Some are, let's be honest, cowards fearing for their own safety who have nonetheless witnessed something otherworldly that demands they get to the bottom of it.

Academic operations take many forms, but all share the purpose of parsing information. They may be widespread and decentralized, like the Arcanum, with chapterhouses in numerous cities around the world, or they may be focused and local, like the secret society of the Doctors of Qazvin, studying the mysteries emerging from the shadows of the nearby mountains in Iran. From permanent, established libraries to itinerant "pop-ups," from well-appointed laboratories to lean-to forensics tents, an Academic org uses what it has to know more.

In certain cases, some amount of religious background informs the Academic's perspective, but not to the extent that they find a home among Religious orgs (see below). Indeed, Academic and Religious orgs are often the most inclined toward kinship and even cooperation, to a point. Unfortunately, the differences and end goals can also become stark between these two, making for dysfunctional rivalries and even open hostilities.

Complications

Of all the orgs, Academics are the ones least likely to find themselves pointing a gun at a cell of Hunters, or vice versa. Any rivalry that develops between Academic orgs and Hunter cells is likely because of a pursuit of mutually desired information, or a unique object, such as a painting that identifies a century-old vampire or a sorcerer's incomprehensible librum. In an adversarial relationship, Academics may position themselves as unbearable gatekeepers, trying to keep the "unqualified casuals" away from information the Academics have decided only they should curate. Cells of Hunters may find themselves raiding Academic libraries or laboratories, deep within which the org has locked away some crucial piece of information or critical artifact.

Not all interactions with Academic orgs need to be overtly antagonistic, from the Hunter perspective. Provided some reasonable negotiation can be done, Hunters may provide muscle to an Academic group, or mutual information-sharing can expand what both a cell and an Academic org know. It all comes back to the function of the orgs, however — like all orgs, even Academics use their knowledge of the Hunt to someone's benefit or to reinforce some structural control. It may not be the org itself, but Academics almost always have questionable allies funding them. Like any think-tank or research project, the knowledge Academics provide can be used to prop up any argument, especially when selectively edited to arrive at a foregone conclusion.

In Chronicles

- An Academic org has information on a werewolf threat lurking in the desolation of the city's depressed industrial district. The Academics know they don't stand a chance against the werewolf themselves and hire the cell to provide muscle and offer to share the intel and post-raid analysis. Of course, that all depends on how the Hunt goes and whether the org chooses to honor its promise.
- A Hunter's contact from an Academic org has been sharing misleading information about the spate of disappearances from among the tourists during the summer season. What's the Academic trying to hide, and how much risk does it pose to the cell?
- An Academic org has purloined a sorcerer's book of unspeakable rituals, but the sorcerer has just become aware of the presence of the Hunters' cell and suspects them of stealing it. Should the cell negotiate with the sorcerer? Because the org isn't going to give that book back… unless the Hunters can somehow convince them?

Corporate

This wasn't part of the estimate. This is going to cost a lot more.

One truism of modern life is that there's big money in convincing people to be afraid of something and selling them solutions. Home invasion! Buy a gun. Burglars! Hire a home security service. Identity theft! Subscribe to 24-hour monitoring. The supernatural! Employ a monster-hunter for hire.

Strangely, this last one is where word-of-mouth isn't a great marketing tool, as many Corporate orgs are actually invested in the secrecy of their efforts, at least for now. The business model is too young and it's too early to know the full extent of proprietary secrets that might be extracted from the "occult frontier."

Corporate orgs are stable and well-funded, and in the best cases, reduce the hunt to a (sometimes defensibly proprietary) process. The corporations themselves tend to be small or even secret, often gaining their funding from governmental grants or contracts that effectively outsource private companies to handle public matters. In this regard, Corporate orgs are effectively private military contractors with supernatural remit. All their processes don't necessarily make the hunt any easier, however, even if they do make Corporate org response more predictable, and therefore more cost-efficient and profitable. All it takes is one unpredictable Unusual Threat to turn a Corporate op upside down — which it will probably have underwritten as part of an extensive insurance arrangement.

Some Corporate orgs may be part of a tech billionaire's diversified portfolio, they may be part of an anti-tax maverick's big picture plan to bring communities out from under the shadow of governmental problem-solving, or they may genuinely be part of an earnest effort to fight the supernatural as part of a "market-based solution." Whatever the case, they're riskier, but that risk also means a willingness to try unproven methods and potentially even experimental technology (again, itself often proprietary).

Frighteningly, many Corporate organizations have never actually seen or dealt with a supernatural creature, and are instead run by grifters or self-mythologized "visionaries" who are more intent on bilking local governments out of private contracts or franchising schlocky licensed gear than they are in actually bringing down a monstrous threat. Private-equity monster hunting has more than a few Quadro Tracker or Theranos-style frauds of its own, and the occult nature of the effort generally keeps the stories from spreading.

Some few Corporate or Entrepreneurial orgs buck the technocratic, IPO-seeking trend and are employee-owned, union-backed, or even effectively syndicalist entities. There's an inherent alignment between working toward a common good and the hunters owning the means of the hunt. Similarly, some non-profit hunter orgs are effectively set up as corporations. These sorts of small orgs are somewhat more in line with the cells-and-creeds approach of hunting the supernatural, in direct opposition to the management perspective that no matter how unsafe the situation, there will always be more workers to throw at a problem.

Complications

Company ethics and personal morals often clash with legalities for Corporate orgs, though some of the most stable Corporate orgs are sufficiently lawyered-up that they don't run into the same difficulties that other non-Governmental orgs do. As well, knowing that there's a slush fund for collateral damage may cause some shortcuts, or even encourage a certain amount of "That's Accounting's problem" attitudes. In many cases, the nature of the business itself is a moral danger, and even the most veteran Corporate hunters realize that they're effectively participating in a protection racket. To say nothing of hunters knowing that no one deserves to be eaten by a werewolf, but refusing to do anything about it until the potential victim has paid up. Profit motive is often inherently at odds with a genuine desire to stop supernatural predation.

Like many Governmental organizations, Corporate orgs often have rivalries with other commercial hunter companies (whether orgs or cells). The risk rises in cases of rivalries becoming recklessly competitive, when corporate espionage between the two undermines operational integrity, or when the winner-takes-all nature of commercial monster hunting means only one group is going to get paid. Surely deregulation will solve this somehow.

In Chronicles

- A Corporate org wants to subcontract the Hunters' cell. They've lost a cache of experimental weapons and smart tools to a tech-savvy supernatural creature who's reverse-engineering them to be able to worm their way into company lab files or even personnel databases, compromising individual hunters or sabotaging powerful designs.
- A Corporate org and a rival org have combined their efforts to sideline the Hunters' cell. As part of a mercenary due diligence, however, the Corporate org sees an opportunity to profit by playing the rival against the cell. Perhaps it simply offers the Hunters' cell an opportunity to buy out the contract — or perhaps it has a more nefarious profit motive in mind, pitting the rival and the cell against supernatural quarry with the intent of cleaning up afterward.
- As above, but the Corporate org sees an opportunity to sell out the Hunters' cell by cooperating with the supernatural entity. After all, this wealthy bloodsucker seems to have a mind for business, and there's nothing in the company bylaws preventing one of the undead from owning a controlling share of the stock. Assuming the cell survives the betrayal, they now have to worry about an antagonistic org that's the tool of exactly the sort of creature it's intended to hunt....

Government

Remember, this is the big one. Eliminate the target with extreme prejudice. Orders came down giving the okay for collateral damage as well. Just get it done.

When most people think of organizations of hunters, the first thing that springs to mind is often the "alphabet soup" of Governmental organizations. Well-funded, well-equipped, and well-organized — at least so far as the popular conception goes — Government orgs tout a quick, efficient, and comprehensive response. With access to military-grade tools and an astounding array of resources by which to realize OPSEC and INFOSEC, Governmental orgs are undeniably effective at hammering down Unusual Threat. As an extension of that, they're also tasked with covering up the presence of any effort to hammer down Unusual Threat, and even obfuscating the proof of Unusual Threat Response's existence, at least until a public-facing policy on them can be legitimized.

Behind that facade, however, Government orgs are adversaries of great complexity, itself unsurprising as they represent an extension of a broad public will, at least so far as their mandate is concerned. Ideally, they exist "to protect and serve," as an authority to stave off the predations of the supernatural in the interests of the public good. In this era of opaque government and increasing authoritarianism, however, Government orgs are in practice an unchecked tool of state violence with no redress. Case in point: Name a single government whose constitution makes any mention of supernatural forces and the need to protect the populace from them.

Of course, that's the crux of it. The occult is by definition secret, and therefore so must be the governmental function to combat it. It doesn't engender any amount of popular trust, however. And especially in neoliberal governments that fund themselves on the efforts of working citizens for the private benefit of the privileged, so, too, do those efforts seem aligned with the protection of private property and the passage of privileged information into the hands of those who would best profit by it.

Complications

Lately, a schism has been growing within a number of Government orgs. While many of the long-standing orgs have been a traditional bastion for supremacist outlooks under the auspices of "preserving law and order," there's an undercurrent of those among the orgs who challenge the reactionary use of power, especially to enforce unjust law and order. Certainly, that perspective is in the minority at present, but the fact that it's present at all indicates at least some desire for a rebuke of the authoritarian use of the orgs. Whether or not these dissenting perspectives will change the momentum of Government orgs, or will instead be purged by loyalists and internal affairs self-investigations remains to be seen.

Beyond that, communication between Governmental orgs (and to a greater extent, other orgs and organization types) is often uncooperative at best, and fraught by rivalry and resentment at worst. Which means it's downright common to find out that one operation's targets are under surveillance by a rival Government org, making jurisdiction a complication, oh, and the perimeter's also been compromised by some group of private-sector what-the-fucks who either didn't know about or actively ignored the supposedly secured perimeter. Acceptable collateral damage? Waiting on your call, Captain.

In Chronicles

- Using its relationships with local law enforcement, a Government org seeks to shut down the Hunters' cell. Everything in the Hunters' personal backgrounds and even the details of their identities suddenly become tools to use against them. The problem will all go away if they agree to cooperate on upcoming UTR for which the org has next to no intel. Smoke 'em out, indies, or your sister stays in jail until she defaults on her mortgage.
- Contracting with a foreign nation's Governmental org, the Hunters' cell finds themselves left high and dry after the op. Have supernatural allies of the quarry found out about them? Is the org itself trying to disappear them to cover its own tracks and skip out on the contract? Or is the nation's official policy that no such operation exists, and therefore no funding for it?
- After a successful Hunt, the cell has eliminated the quarry and discovered that the shapeshifter was part of a greater pack of werewolves inflicting terror on the region. This is especially valuable information, and the cell finds itself courted by a Governmental org, and a rival Governmental org, each trying to freeze out the other. For a while it's nice to have something someone else wants, but before long the orgs turn aggressive, and it becomes less about finding the best deal and more about getting out from under the feuding officials and their heavily armed agents.

Religious

The Devil made them do it. Lock and load.

Religious organizations take on the perspective that their war against the supernatural is existential. Vampires are the unshriven risen as revenants, werewolves are the result of pacts made with devils, restless ancestors torment those who survive them — supernatural creatures are foot soldiers in an army of evil sent as harbingers of the End Times. And all of them exist to tempt people away from the strictures of the church, temple, mosque, or other institutions that provide the world with the stability its leaders expect.

Still, the influence and reputation of Religious organizations is often greater than its hunters' numbers would suggest. Indeed, vampires have described the eras of overt Religious action as literal Inquisitions. Even in these comparatively secular modern times, Religious organizations are feared for their ability to punish, and to make pariahs out of those who collude — or who are simply accused of colluding — with nefarious powers. Especially where Christianity holds sway, such overzealous reputations are burnished by a variety of culture-war skirmishes against art, music, film, and other expressions of popular culture that have strayed far from genuinely righteous values — reinforcing the function of the org as a vehicle for control rather than spirituality.

Religious orgs tend to have small but dedicated — even fanatical — memberships with rigid, fundamental outlooks. As with Governmental orgs, they attract support from those drawn to authoritarian figureheads and those who would inflict violence on others because an influential leader told them to do so; it's simply a religious authority as opposed to a secular one, and originates with a divine purpose instead of a temporal one… even if the results end up looking very similar.

Complications

Needless to say, Religious orgs represent a very specific perspective emerging from a very extreme interpretation of religious mores. Not every religion even has (or wants) orgs; not every religious org operates with the same severity as the Entity (see p. 231). Plenty of Religious outlooks stem from a genuine concern for their congregations, but there's a vast gulf between a group of concerned Talmudic scholars and a detachment of armored, assault rifle-wielding zealots funded by dark-money contributions.

As a result, Religious orgs sometimes end up being the bad apple that spoils the bunch, with an outsized reputation that causes people to look upon faith in general as a tool of authority rather than an instrument of community and betterment. The most dire of Religious org members even conflate their desire for control with that realization of community and betterment, believing that if everyone else would just realize that theirs is the One True Way, everything would be fine.

Power and control often benefit from misdirecting popular perception of who's wielding them. As a result, more than one organization that positions itself as Faithful is actually Governmental, Corporate, or even Vigilante, simply appropriating the trappings of holy good or moral authority.

In Chronicles

- A Faithful org decries the players' Hunters as dangerous individuals, and manages to turn away even some of their allies, confidants, and people they've worked with in the past.
- One of the cell's Hunters has been possessed by a demon! This (probably) isn't true, but hunters from a Faithful org certainly see a lot of evidence of such, and undertake their own hunt against that individual and any members of their cell who may seek to protect them.
- A Faithful org has discovered what may well be a legitimate relic, and surely it would see better use among the cell's assets. Can it be negotiated for? What if the org loses it and the cell recovers it? Is it worth outright stealing it?

Vigilantes

I don't even recognize this city anymore. The devil-worshippers and night-freaks have dragged it to hell.

For some hunters, any kind of structure or greater organization gets in the way of putting the hatchet and fire to the monsters. A Vigilante's greatest asset is to *strike now, strike hard, don't let them know what's hitting them, go go go!* and in this regard they share a great deal with Hunter cells: Such impassioned devotion might even be confused for Drive.

Vigilantes are unique among the hunter org types, ironically, because their primary measurement of success is the number of monsters they've foiled. They're not after the power of Governmental orgs, the profit margin of the Corporate orgs, or the archival expansion of the Academic orgs. Or, at least, they're not necessarily after those things. What makes each Vigilante org tick is a unique combination of the individuals who comprise it. For better or for worse, Vigilantes generally want to take action without being encumbered by a specific dogma or structure beyond what they can see. It's the sort of "unorganized organization" structure that could include a bomb-building anarchist, a disabled veteran arch-patriot, and an ex-cop who was discharged from the force for disciplinary issues, or a different org that includes a folk guitarist, a morally flexible hacker, and a retired postal worker. Or, hell, those two orgs might form a larger org because they were tired of stepping on each other's toes when that bat-faced blood-devil is obviously the real enemy. Strange bedfellows.

Complications

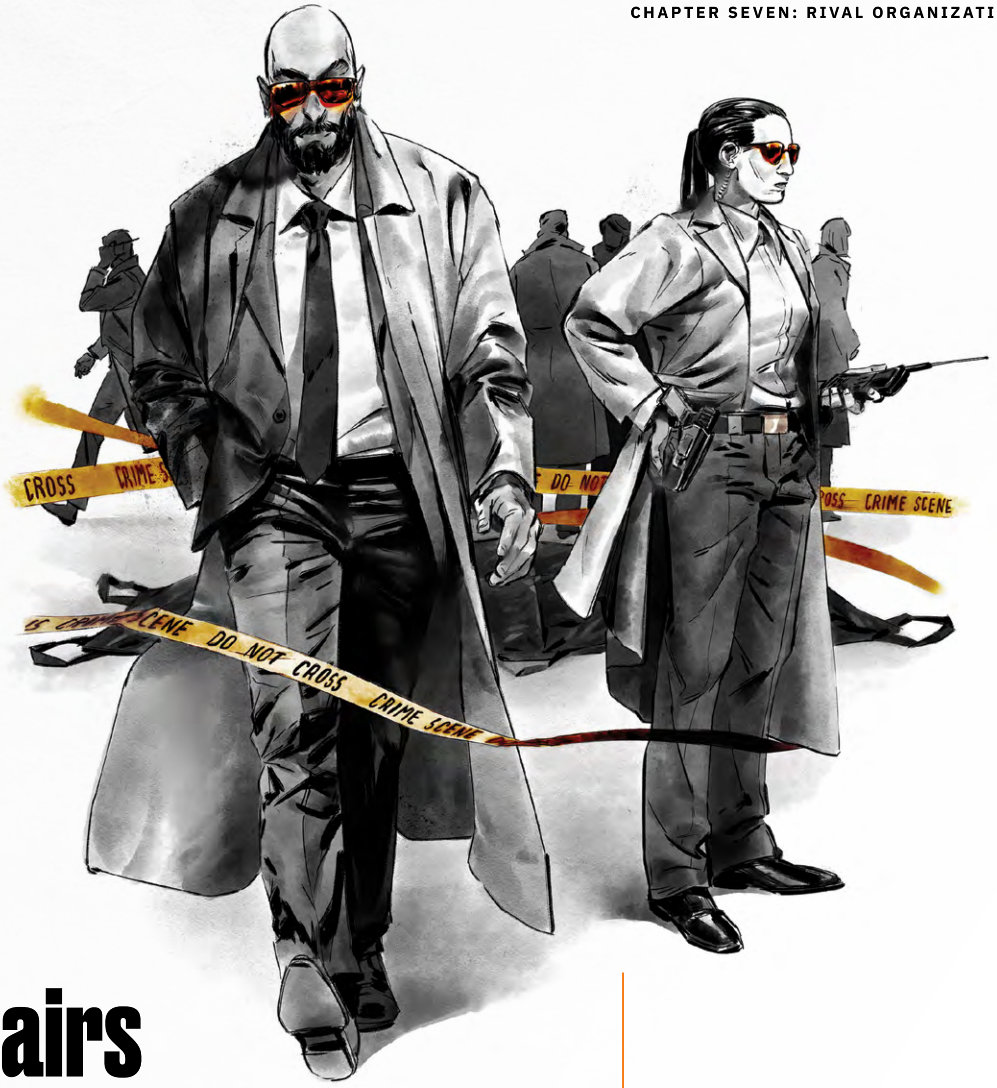
This may all sound understandable, and to an extent it is. Underlying it all, though, is the element common to all orgs: a desire for control. The Vigilante wants to be right. Eventually the desire to be right risks superseding the desire to stop the monsters.

Characterizing most Vigilantes is a frustration with the lack of effectiveness of societal safeguards when it comes to the shadow-cloaked world that everyone else seems to want to pretend doesn't exist. Go to the police, get labeled a crackpot. Go to one of the more formal orgs, get sent to boot camp. Nobody else has any urgency when it comes to fighting back, from the Vigilante perspective. As a result, they take matters into their own hands — hence their organization-type name — at the same time they cultivate a bitter suspicion about the various structures that are actually supposed to be doing the protecting.

In the end, this makes Vigilantes highly likely to be "the one who goes too far." Without the discipline, hierarchies, or other reinforcements of even the other orgs, let alone the perspectives of the creeds, Vigilante hunters might accept collateral damage, or even come to rationalize the death of innocents as means to an end. So long as there's a monster somewhere — so long as the Vigilante was right all along, and can reap others' acknowledgement of that — Vigilantes are too often willing to play fast and loose with the costs others will inevitably pay.

In Chronicles

- The cell takes over patrol of the south side from the cell before them, which met a tragic ending during a poltergeist infestation that was never resolved. The more research they do, however, the more they realize that it wasn't Hunters who came before them, but a Vigilante org that had so brutally bullied the territory that even those who would normally help out with an investigation are now silent and resentful of any "organized" attempt to solve the neighborhood haunt.
- The cell runs afoul of a Vigilante org that's abusing its monster-hunting mandate to "clean up the streets" of not only the bloodsucker outbreak, but also of a very loosely and extremely prejudicially defined "crime," reasoning that the "criminals" are in league with the vampires.
- In a situation more redolent of a fairytale than of pragmatic modern times, an inscrutable creature demands a child to be given in tribute every 20 years, and that time is coming up. A Vigilante org that remembers the last time the creature made its demands originally starts out in opposition to the creature, but it has outwitted them at every turn and they now seek appeasement. The child-gift has been selected, and hopefully the Hunters can deter the Vigilantes from perpetuating the cycle of abduction and tragedy.



Special Affairs Division (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation)

Government Org

Bloodsuckers. Blankbodies. Leeches. The Special Affairs Division of the United States Government uses all of these terms and more to describe what it sees as a burgeoning terrorist threat of unusual nature: Vampires.

The Special Affairs Division has a long and storied and at times strange history that grew out of Cold War-era paranoia, including a period of time in which it was almost completely discredited and fell from favor. Indeed, SAD likely survived the 1970s through the early 2000s only because it's a branch of the FBI. On the other hand, SAD is the only agency in the United States government that has been dealing with the supernatural for decades. Even its sibling-rival, the Information Awareness Office, has been operating for less than half that time.

Times have changed, though, and SAD now rides a wave of U.S. authoritarianism that keeps it funded, active, and aggressive. Today, Special Affairs Division is at the forefront of supernatural investigation in the United States, and with shared jurisdictions that occasionally send it abroad, or at least have it liaising with additional powers. As part of a greater Unusual Threat Response effort directed by FIRSTLIGHT (see p. 231), the SAD is the archetypal agents-in-the-field governmental monster-hunting org. With vast resources at its command, the SAD responds quickly and decisively to a number of supernatural threats, and Hunters recognize them by their telltale black sunglasses, severe suits, and sleek fatigues. Oh, and the veritable arsenal its operators bring into the field.

As an extension of the FBI, the SAD is more of a policing and investigatory body than a military force, though there's no arguing that it has been very thoroughly militarized. With everything at its disposal from homeland security materiel to cutting-edge blankbody-detecting technologies developed by the same defense contractor partners that outfit the armed forces, the only thing that distinguishes the SAD from the IAO to the civilian onlooker — despite the confidential nature of both orgs — is perhaps a handful of insignia.

Hunters likely become familiar with the SAD very quickly, particularly if their cell conducts any noteworthy interactions with vampires. SAD agents notoriously claim authority over any Unusual Threat Response suspected of blankbody involvement, whether seemingly associated with a stalemated downtown Detroit bank heist or a decades-long string of missing-persons cases up and down the East Coast.

Indeed, from the Hunter perspective, the Special Affairs Division is everything wrong with orgs as a whole. To all appearances, the SAD's concern lies more with exercising its authority and keeping order than it does in protecting the individuals upon whom the shrieking legions of blankbodies prey.

Key Personnel

- **Marcus Questor**, Director of Special Affairs Division
- **Alan Kenchlow**, Research Director, who himself possesses what appear to be extra-sensory modes of perception
- **Gerald Osbourne**, Director and interdepartmental liaison, coordinating information flow among the department's legislative-branch benefactors as well as IAO and FIRSTLIGHT
- **Marsha Crowe**, former Regional Director who has recently returned to field work — whether as a result of political developments of individual intentions is unclear
- **Agent (?) Cog**, a self-described "deep state" intelligence agent, posts a popular series of conspiracy videos on YouTube, "exposing the full extent of the vampire terrorist menace"

Operation

Perhaps more than any other org, Special Affairs Division operates with an astounding array of resources. Its tremendous arsenal is only a single tool — it also has access to investigative technologies, impressive travel and logistics staff, and a media and public relations cadre that give the SAD one of the most broad jurisdictions of all the orgs. This, combined with the U.S. government's willingness to reach as far as it likes in pursuit of what it perceives as threats against itself, means the SAD can potentially be encountered anywhere, not just on American soil. In this regard, it sometimes surpasses the operational theater of its parent department, the FBI.

As part of its directive, the Special Affairs Division regards "the vampire problem" specifically as a form of terrorist threat, with manpower and tactics deployed to react. In most cases, it prefers not to deal with other supernatural creatures. In practice, this means that if it thinks it's dealing with something "other," it'll push that investigation off onto the plate of its sibling-rival, the IAO, or even hire out local independent investigators like Hunter cells. When dealing with these last, the SAD generally prefers established companies with good reputations rather than loose cannons and wild-eyed zealots. Circumstances may change during any given situation, however — all those skilled PR people can concoct plausible deniability, if necessary.

As with any org of its size, agility isn't necessarily SAD's forte. Its ops gather intel over extended periods of times, and some critics consider that it allows too many victims to pile up during the information-gathering phase of a SAD campaign. Indeed, some Hunters, particularly of the Martial creed, may have started their careers with the SAD and left the org because of a perceived reluctance to act on its part. It's an accusation that isn't always fair, as the org prefers to have all its ducks in a row and to be factually correct when pursuing Unusual Threat Response, but compounded with its greater purpose of enforcing law and sovereignty whether those aims are just leads to a certain degree of mistrust. It's never good optics when the black helicopters show up and discharge kill-squads that insist they're the good guys.

Complications

Given the above, with the significant resources available to it, the SAD can occasionally resort to a shoot-first, ask-questions-later mentality, especially if operatives believe they're about to lose control of an op for some reason or another. Which is to say, when the SAD is present, there's a non-zero chance that the situation may well go all to shit, leaving Hunters stuck in a very dangerous aftermath, or even in the crossfire between the quarry and the SAD itself.

With its perspective that Unusual Threat Response is effectively counterterrorism, Special Affairs Division has been known to consider Hunters rogue operators if not active terrorists themselves. Which, well, can potentially be true, regardless of the dubiousness of SAD motives. Without a doubt, the SAD is the single most likely Government or and federal agency with which a cell of Hunters might find itself in an armed conflict.

Given its broad remit and wide license to perform field operations, the SAD is highly likely to be interested in vampiric Unusual Threat that has attained a certain threshold of notoriety. Which is to say, SAD's interest often overlaps with that of Hunter cells quite frequently, assuming a vampiric quarry that has been active over a significant period of time, or because of a singular high-visibility event that would have brought the vampire to SAD's attention. And SAD often takes a big-picture view of the vampiric threat — the department would much prefer to bring down an entire cult or cell of vampires rather than a single individual. So it's willing to give vampires leeway enough to expose others of their kind... which is likely to have a human cost.

Beyond this, Special Affairs Division has, over its decades of operation, accumulated quite a stockpile of various vampiric belongings, artifacts, tools, and other property or evidence, civil forfeiture being as potent a weapon in the SAD arsenal as any firearm. Perhaps second only to the Vatican's own trove, the warehouses of the SAD might contain anything from a young vampire's contact lenses to the "cursed" straight razor a purportedly 300-year-old vampire used to feed so they wouldn't have to sully themselves by putting their mouth directly on their filthy, filthy victims. Sometimes this means such strange relics might be found in the hands of SAD operatives themselves. Sometimes a Hunter cell might decide that it needs what it thinks is in one of those warehouses....

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

THE HONEYPOT

The cell comes into possession of a trove of weaponry plainly marked as belonging to the FBI/ SAD. Surely it's part of an op in progress or a materiel cache to be used. It's just too good to pass up, however — once per session, treat it as granting any Hunter who wants to use it the Arsenal Edge, or if the Hunter using it already has the Arsenal Edge, any Perk they desire within that Edge (see p. 90). Problem is, the cache is, in fact, part of an op, and that op intends to snare the Hunters' cell as a terrorist cell. This particular squad of SAD believes the Hunters to be flunkies of the supernatural quarry they've both been tracking, and whether the players' Hunters fall for the ruse is up to them.

INTERVIEWS WITH THE VAMPIRE

The cell has been pursuing the same vampiric quarry that Special Affairs Division has, and the Hunters are well aware of the feds' presence. So is the quarry, who seems to have been through this before, or so they say in a harrowing moment when they get the drop on the Hunters — but instead of tearing them apart and gizzling their blood, the vampire wants to cut a deal. Let him go, and, in fact, smuggle him out of the immediate situation and away from the SAD op, and he'll give up a more tempting target: the one who made him and his vampiric "siblings" into the undead. This creates a question of opportunity costs for the cell. Do they forego the single evil to (hopefully) take down a greater number? Can they even trust the vampire? On top of all of it, how greatly will this disrupt the ongoing SAD op, and will they be able to extract themselves from that debacle once it plays out?

PERSON OF INTEREST

Special Affairs Division has taken a keen interest in one of the Hunters, but the information seems erroneous. The're hauled in as a confederate of a suspected Leech. It's obviously completely incorrect, but it's unlikely that the Hunter will be allowed to return to their cell by claiming that they're part of an armed resistance group hunting the same vampire that the SAD is pursuing. But maybe a mutually satisfactory deal can take place? And just who tipped off the feds that the Hunter was working for the vampire anyway?

CONSPIRACIES OF CONSPIRACIES

As one might expect, conspiracy begets conspiracy, and where orgs form, factions form within them and even among them. The World of Darkness has long been known for its "wheels within wheels" structures of power among its supernatural groups and their schemes, and the same rings true for human orgs. Politics is the exercise of power, and as influence and control build their own momentum, factions arise to press their agenda for their specific worldview. Overall, that's what the orgs represent: Groups among greater human societies that oppose the supernatural for their own purposes, and certainly groups within those groups have their own agendas.

Hunter: The Reckoning doesn't place much emphasis on these conspiracies themselves, as the focus is generally on the individual Hunters and their personal lives over the grand politics of orgs and governments. Still, for Storytellers looking to evoke layers of paranoia and add nuance to the antagonistic relationship between Hunters and the orgs, knowing what's happening at the upper echelons can provide mysterious human conspirators with whom to add complexity to a chronicle.

More information on all of these groups can be found in the **Second Inquisition** supplement for **Vampire: The Masquerade**, but don't feel as if you need those layers of conspiracy. Again, **Hunter**'s focus is most often on the immediate and personal.

The important takeaway is that these orgs and orgs-of-orgs present a tremendous muddle, an impenetrable morass of conflicting jurisdiction, political ambition, legality or constitutionality, and massive resources. Any given op might be a by-the-books takedown of a verified supernatural threat, or it might be a mismanaged boondoggle, in which none of the operators acknowledge each other's authority and the quarry gets away because everyone was too busy watching each other for a betrayal and OPFOR went unsecured.

THE COALITION

What began as shorthand for a trans-national collaboration between monster-hunting orgs has since taken on its own life. Officially — insofar as such any participant recognizes the designation — the Coalition consists of five individual Government and Religious orgs: FIRSTLIGHT (see below, representing the United States), Brazil's BOES or BOPE-RJ, Russia's GRU-N58, the UK's JTRPG, and the Society of St. Leopold itself.

At best, the Coalition has overreached its purview. At worst, the Coalition is itself illicit or even illegal. But that's for the courts to decide, or maybe the legislators. Maybe a military tribunal? No one knows, but right now, Lieutenant, we have three confirmed blankbodies moving toward the airport, and if you want me to wait until the international validation comes through, I'll gladly put that in my report, sir.

FIRSTLIGHT

What may or may not be an org itself, the group known as FIRSTLIGHT seems to be a coordinating authority, managing operations among the SAD, IAO, and other agencies. FIRSTLIGHT does not appear to have any field agents of its own. That is, FIRSTLIGHT has no field agents. What it does appear to possess is a myriad of deputies, liaisons, and factotums who manage the information flow among the dozen-plus orgs with which it maintains relationships. FIRSTLIGHT tells an org to jump, and that org's operators ask "How high?"

Strange circumstances surround FIRSTLIGHT, from its inviolate handling of information regarding vampires (full-daylight briefing rooms only), to its inseparable relationship with the Society of St. Leopold that seems to be either parallel to or "a level above" the semi-official nature of the Coalition agreement. To make matters stranger, rumors persist that Director Felicity Price of the org is herself a ghoul, a blood-addict, or even actively a vampire. Plainly preposterous, if for no other reason than the daylight briefings and the in-flight strategy meetings that defy all known blankbody behavioral patterns, but there's obviously… something there given the pervasive nature of the rumors.

ESOG/ LA ENTITA

Even the Society of St. Leopold has internal factions and schisms, and the group known as La Entita styles itself as the "true heart" of the org, and even the spiritual foundation of the Coalition. ESOG is the Entity Special Operations Group of the Society of St. Leopold headquartered in the Vatican and operates in numerous locales around the world. Unless the Hunters find themselves deeply involved in the internal politics of the Society of St. Leopold, they're likely to conflate the greater org and its ESOG subgroup — which may itself prove to be an antagonist at odds with the parent org and perhaps even a strange bedfellow or temporary ally.

ACRONYMS UNLEASHED

Particularly as regards the Government orgs presented herein, many countries have their own orgs dedicated to dealing with the supernatural as a way to maintain their own interpretations of order. From GIGN in France to JTRG and SO13 in the UK to GSG-9 in Germany to GRU-N58 in Russia, HSP in Egypt, and TID in Japan, practically every country has at least one Government org dedicated to Unusual Threat Response. Again, since the emphasis in Hunter is on individual cells, we don't cover those in any detail here, but you can substitute the functions and characteristics of SAD and IAO for those orgs, should you need those in those locations. After all, the orgs are built to be antagonists, and the way they come into conflict with the Hunters' cells will be similar for the purposes of your chronicle.

Should you desire more information on them specifically (or more detail on SAD, IAO, etc.), again, the **Second Inquisition** supplement for **Vampire: The Masquerade** has plentiful information for this purpose.

Information Awareness Office (IAO)

Government Org

The purpose of the Information Awareness Office is straightforward: in the terms of its own mission statement, the IAO seeks to cultivate "total information awareness" about all threats to the United States of America. It's an ambitious statement, to be certain, and, unsurprisingly, the IAO defines the United States of America in this context to mean first and foremost the government of the United States and its operations. And it handles anything "too messy" for its sibling agency, the Special Affairs Division.

IAO's primary area of interest is the same undead threat pursued by SAD, and often referred to in the same context, as an insurgent or terrorist opposition. With its original mission much more vaguely defined, however, IAO does maintain an awareness across the supernatural spectrum. This is by no means as substantial as its knowledge of vampires, but it does maintain extensive files on… well, anything that might have once been deemed a threat or been part of its "futures market" in threat analysis. It looks into reports of death cults in remote locations of friendly countries and it looks at your doorbell camera if its algorithms raise the red flag.

Make no mistake, the Information Awareness Office is a military agency with a military function, and if one recognizes its agents, it will likely be because they look like soldiers. They are soldiers, and that's a term with its own broad interpretation in a world where military response is a rule rather than an exception. This also means that the IAO might be found running an information-gathering black site in Chicago or Guantanamo Bay, or it might raid a freight-container transit facility in San Diego, or it might be providing money and weapons to reactionary insurgencies in Azerbaijan.

That's a broad remit and its one IAO finds increasing difficulty handling. As such, it makes use of Armed Forces and other Department of Defense assets frequently, even to the point of hiring mercenaries, contractors, or other freelancers. Of all of the government orgs, IAO is perhaps the most likely to have at least an initially neutral relationship with Hunter cells, so long as the cell has a reasonable reputation and hasn't implicated itself in anti-American activities. That's a tenuous condition, admittedly.

And that's often a point of contention many cells have when considering cooperation with the IAO. The Information Awareness Office has the resources that can greatly aid a hunt, but in the end, its readiness to classify any number of seemingly arbitrary individuals as "enemies of the state," whether they're monster hunters or monsters themselves is a risk Hunters don't often want to take.

Key Personnel

- **Admiral Roberto Farrier**, Director of the Information Awareness Office, handpicked successor to inaugural IAO Director Admiral John Poindexter
- **Col. Linda Kellogg**, Chief Information and Analysis Officer
- **Lt. Col. Amos Tyrell**, Operations Officer, BRIC Theater
- **Cpl. Arlene Knudson**, SOCOM, designated sniper, currently assigned to FIRSTLIGHT team WHITEHORSE
- **Agent Unknown**, sole survivor after the failure of classified Operation Baronet in Equatorial Guinea

Operation

Information Awareness Office is a military org, and operates against the supernatural threat with the full spectrum of assets available to the United States Armed Forces, a spectrum that includes everything from traditional infantry to cyber warfare specialists to military intelligence to engineers. If any branch of the military can do it, IAO can do it, specifically by creating an operation that makes use of those individuals from those armed services. IAO doesn't have a standing company of soldiers of its own, for example — it borrows Special Forces when it needs them for a delicate operation, or it allocates "standard" troops for site security.

Information Awareness Office's relationship with the Department of Defense is complex. It is its own entity but ultimately answers to the DOD and indeed informs the DOD — which is to say, the entirety of the American military. At the same time, it has a wide autonomy to requisition and even direct military support, including everything from literal SEAL teams to calling in favors from allied foreign agencies to practically infinite cash or materiel for bribes. Has the IAO funded mercenary companies illegally? It absolutely has. Has the IAO funded Hunter cells domestically and abroad? Also yes.

The IAO enjoys a profound amount of autonomy — as seems to be the case with American governmental agencies investigating the supernatural — and operates with a profound degree of secrecy. It keeps all of its records heavily classified, and anything it can't manage to keep redacted under the Freedom of Information Act it categorizes very generally as training or counter-terrorism. And it's very good at this as well, with a cadre of career bureaucrats and DOD functionaries knowing the ins and outs of practical policy. Any information that the Information Awareness Office doesn't want you aware of might as well not exist.

In terms of dealing with Unusual Threat Response, IAO's broad resources mean that it may perform any number of functions related to hunting monsters. IAO drone specialists surveil the quarry, IAO analysts determine what weaponry a target has on hand or how its lair might be breached, and IAO combatants kick in the door to Transylvania and put bullets — or more experimental munitions — into the quarry. It's a slick, effective operation, and, honestly, the envy of many Hunter cells.

Complications

For all of its tremendous resources, the IAO itself isn't untouchable. In the early 2000s, a seemingly endless litany of human-rights violations saw it defunded to the point of ineffectuality. Despite that brief period during which it “went dark,” however, it survived, and arguably emerged with even more autonomy in the wake of the Bush-Obama-Trump years of rising autocracy and broad-scale surveillance. Now, there’s probably no way it could be sidelined in the same way it had in the past, though numerous politicians frequently campaign on how “gravely concerned” they are about its function. Of course, those same legislators don’t actually do anything about it, and agree to ratify its budgets 97 percent of the time.

Perhaps the IAO’s greatest weakness is that it’s a federal agency with a huge degree of operational overlap with other agencies (federal and otherwise). It’s an acknowledged rival of the Special Affairs Division, and in no few situations finds itself at odds with local police, foreign entities where it operates, and established military operations (often in places where official IAO presence is illegitimate). For better or for worse, the IAO just doesn’t care whose toes it steps on and relies on its federal authority and nigh-infinite budget to solve problems that emerge in the field. After all, do you want this fucking vampire to keep tearing people’s heads off?

This is at the root of not only how the IAO interacts with almost anyone else, from a department to an individual, but also how it sees its own mandate. It exists because the government that makes it an org says it exists, and to challenge IAO presence is insurgency, impetus for “regime change,” or a violation of the diplomatic terms that have its agents present in the first place. If you’re not with the Office, you’re against it.

This even makes for very strained relationships with organizations that do cooperate. As an advisory body to FIRSTLIGHT, IAO has influence in addition to military might, and the Brazilian, British, Russian, and Vatican partners among the “Five Torches” of the Coalition often find themselves acceding to the pressures of what may well be a rogue Department of Defense office.

Of course, the majority of this is far beyond any capacity in which a cell of Hunters might encounter the Information Awareness Office. What it does help explain, though, is the apparently limitless jurisdiction of the IAO to protect the interests of the government it represents. This might be an especially sore spot if the Hunters are themselves Americans and don’t necessarily feel themselves represented or even protected by IAO operators. (Other nations surely have their analogues, as well, if perhaps in a less global theater of conflict.)

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

FILE NOT FOUND

An individual who is exceedingly well-informed about the cell asks for a meeting, offering information. Minutes before the meeting, one of the Hunters gets a text from the contact — how’d they get their number? — informing them that the plan has changed and they need to pick up a dead drop. It’s a CD-ROM (does anyone even have any hardware that can read this thing?) with extensive files on a decades-old investigation into a blankbody here in the Hunters’ hometown. The dossier is stamped all over with aged IAO watermarks and research into the target indicates that they’re still at large. Just putting hands on the file is probably a federal crime. Why’d the investigation end, and without apprehension of the target? Who’s the contact and how did they know so much about the Hunters? And why do they want the cell to go after that vampire now, years after the case being abandoned?

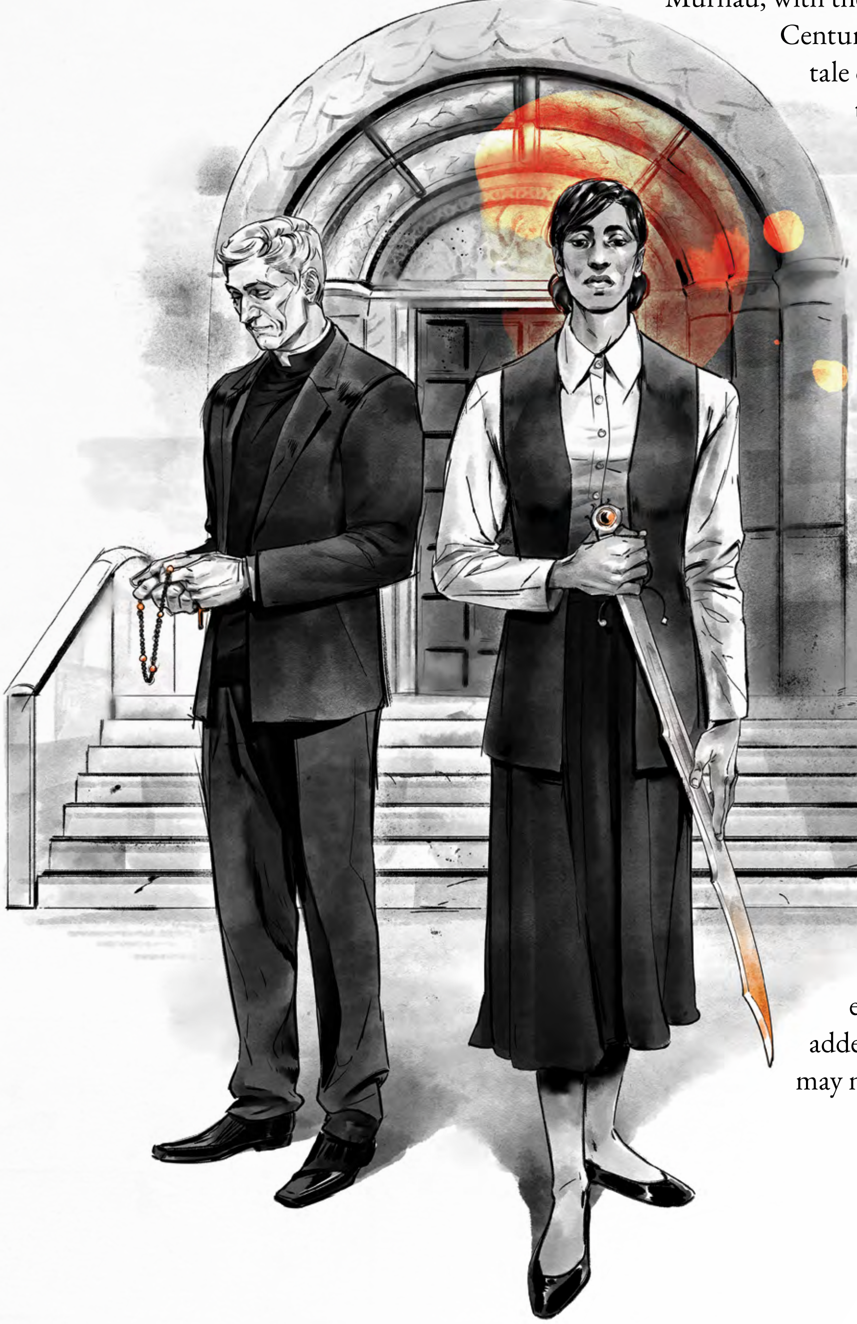
FOR OLD TIME’S SAKE

An IAO agent with connections to one of the Hunters gets in touch, promising funding and support for an operation they need officially kept off the books. There’s ample existing intel on the quarry and good relations with locals on the ground — and that’s the only catch. The op is in Syria, and the US isn’t officially supposed to be there. That’s all above their pay grade, though; all the cell needs to do is keep their heads down, handle the target, and make it to the airport. Seven days into the op, however, all contact with the IAO and the cell’s handlers goes silent, and they’re illegally in a foreign country, engaging in what sure looks like armed rebellion.

Society of St. Leopold

Religious Org

When people think of the implacable "witch hunter," or the severe judgment of Torquemada or Savonarola, or the era that human history and even some vampires regard as "the Inquisition," they're thinking of the Society of St. Leopold. Indeed, the history of the Society goes back as far as the 13th century, with the founding of a vampire-hunting edict to be steered by Leopold of Murnau, with the authority bestowed by Pope Gregory IX.



Centuries of pop culture and history tell the rough tale of the Society, with such popular fascinations as the Spanish Inquisition, Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*, and any number of persecutions of "heresies," "witches," and, frankly, many other challenges to the supremacy of the Church. It is the very archetype of what it means to be an org, mobilizing punitive resources against any challenge to the order it imposes upon the societies in which it is present.

Tonight, the emphasis of the Society of St. Leopold remains on vampire-hunting, with occasional forays into its historical bailiwicks of heretic-hunting, and the condemnation of sorcerers and warlocks. Despite its focus being the undead, the Society of St. Leopold willingly and authoritatively inserts itself into any manifestation of the supernatural that earns its attention, though not necessarily to the full extent of its resources. If nothing else, the case makes for another annal to be added to its much-admired vault, which may or may not be located beneath the Vatican itself.

Key Personnel

- **Grand Inquisitor Ingrid Bauer**, the “Iron Maiden”
- **Agent Boniface**, Captain (field promotion), ESOG Team IV
- **Donatella Ulfila,** Antiquities Curator at the central vault (believed to be in the Vatican, Vienna, or Geneva)
- **Matteo Lusardi**, Information Technology and Analysis, currently integrated with the Cenacle of St. Margaret
- **Agent Unknown**, Inquisitor of the Cenacle of St. Baltasar, gone missing in Manaus, the only operator left unaccounted for (all others confirmed deceased)

Operation

Centralized by the Vatican, the structure of the Society of St. Leopold itself is unsurprisingly complex and hierarchical, and more than a bit opaque to those outside. The greater org consists of the entirety of operations, from individual priests in worldwide dioceses to investigators who delve into the details of individual cases to the maintenance clergy of the nigh-legendary “vault” containing centuries of evidence to at-large exorcists who can handle (or debunk) manageable expressions of the supernatural. Groups of Inquisitors for the Society are known as cenacles, and they exist in some capacity everywhere the Catholic Church does, with or without the visibility of the community in question.

Additionally, the Society of St. Leopold has any number of diplomatic relationships with organizations that aren’t themselves part of the Society, but that may receive the counsel of Catholic advisors. To this end, it occupies a place among the “Five Torches,” the org-of-orgs known as the Coalition of multinational vampire-hunting agencies, giving it extraordinary influence in the ongoing war against the supernatural.

Beyond this exists the Entity Special Operations Group (ESOG) or Gladius Dei, a literal special forces group maintained by the order and dispatched into the same sorts of supernatural situations that an SAD strike team or squad of IAO-tasked SEALs might be. The Inquisitor’s purpose hasn’t changed since the 13th century, but its mien and loadout definitely have. Notably, the Society of St. Leopold isn’t above the use

> Today I have seen first-hand the truths of which our Mother, the Church, speaks, and I am filled with dread.
>
> This morning I visited the donjon wherein a small number of unrepentant heretics were confined. Chained to the wall was a thin, waifish figure of a woman, her girlish features transfigured into a visage of seething hatred. I exhorted her to confess and abjure her sins, but all I received was a steady stream of churlish obscenities. I feared possession in her case; already she was pale of skin and exceedingly gaunt.
>
> As I approached her, her fury trebled, and she struggled with the iron fetters that bound her to the wall. To my amazement and horror, she broke free from her fetters and hurled herself at me, her hands transformed into vicious claws, her mouth agape and revealing a set of gleaming fangs. Truly this was one of the vampyri that I had heard so many legends about, legends I had refused to believe.
>
> Instinct drew my hand to my crucifix, which I held up to the beast as I ordered it to stop in the name of the Lord. The Lord is mighty indeed, for the beast cringed from my warding crucifix and backed away as much as possible. At this point, the donjon guards entered the fray, and with swords and torches, and ultimately, the splintered shaft of a broken spear, destroyed the creature in front of me.
>
> At this moment I realized that the Beast had stood before me, and that my mission was clear. By God, I was delivered to combat the forces of the Antichrist, which I had seen even now before me.
>
> — Leopold of Murnau, The Testament of Leopold

of preternatural or divine power as a tool against the supernatural. It has any number of theurgists under its auspices who themselves wield relics or even potent manifestations of personal faith that can bring them onto an almost equal footing with certain supernatural quarry, and at the very least provide surprising advantage against more powerful monsters. Additionally, the Society has developed certain potent tools and weapons that can be employed by operators who aren't themselves possessed of preternatural ability. For example, ESOG has been known to deploy a substance known as the Velum Sanctuarii (also known as the Holy Veil or just the Red Gas) that desiccates vampires trapped within it while leaving humans exposed to it unharmed, which can be deployed in a manner similar to tear gas or even smoke grenades, targeting broad areas or individual vampire lairs.

Complications

The Society of St. Leopold is the model of intractable and doctrinaire. It has an inflexible perspective, an inflexible methodology, and an inflexible dogma. For all its temporal (and spiritual) power, it's an org with a complete unwillingness to compromise.

However, that's not to say its individual operators and Inquisitors are unwilling to compromise. Pragmatism has its place, and the clever ESOG squad captain or the shrewd exorcist know when to make a deal that may lead them up the chain. This pragmatism, however, can come back to haunt them, as the rigid dogma of the org itself might result in such individuals being seen as compromised, corrupt, or in the thrall of the Adversary. Which is to say, the wise field agent covers their tracks when cutting deals.

And cutting deals is a practical reality. One vampire surely deserves its banishment back to Hell, but if that vampire promises to lead Inquisitors to a hive of more vampires — and can be trusted to follow through on such a promise — that's more souls saved. Or at least a greater accomplishment for the operation.

So, too, it goes when dealing with cells of Hunters, as well. Since the full extent of the diabolical powers monsters possess cannot be known, it's occasionally worthwhile to let unbelievers or secular forces shoulder the risk, especially when those self-styled Hunters willingly place themselves at risk.

As might be expected, the terror Inquisitors inspire among supernatural creatures also extends to the human world. It's not without reason that the historical Inquisition has such a brutal reputation among the people they're ostensibly protecting. This is, after all, an org that has among its spiritual predecessors the priest who originally said, "Kill them all. God will know His own."

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

THE PRIEST WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD

An operator for the Society of St. Leopold makes contact with the Hunters' cell, looking to leave the org but wanting to continue the fight against the creatures of the night. Depending on the Hunters' backgrounds, this may be particularly resonant with a player's Hunter who themselves had worked for an org in the past. But what are the details surrounding the Inquisitor's departure? What was the last straw, so to speak, and why now? What quarry was the Inquisitor's cenacle pursuing? What's the solution — join the players' cell, or simply help the erstwhile Leopoldite find a cell of their own? And what of the inevitable retribution from the Society itself that'll follow?

HOLY TERROR

Approached by a Leopoldite liaison, the cell learns that their quarry is also an Unusual Threat of interest to the Society. The problem the Inquisitors have is that the quarry seems unusually resistant to the weapons in its arsenal. Whether through gentle pressure (so much as the Society is able to exert it) or overt threats, the Hunters find themselves testing the waters, trying to figure out exactly why the target is seemingly unaffected by the Inquisitors' faith-based approach. As it turns out, the quarry was once one of the Society itself, and is adept at anticipating its dogmatic strategies, which it can counter as appropriate. Hopefully the Hunters prove to be less predictable than the Inquisitors... and if the cell proves effective, the Inquisitors will likely try to usurp command of the operation.

The Arcanum

Academic Org

The Arcanum is perhaps the best-known and even most successful of the Academic orgs. With a pedigree stretching back to Victorian times and an extensive network of chapterhouses across multiple continents, the Arcanum is arguably the pre-eminent supernatural discovery agency in the world today, or at least in the West. Indeed, the Arcanum as an organization is the very model of the scholarly occultist society, its agents genteel, well established in their locales, and, in some cases, compromised by the very entities the organization purports to observe.

And that observation is at the core of the Arcanum's mission. Operating (more or less) in accordance with its self-imposed code of conduct known as the Syllabus, the Arcanum devotes itself to discovery, learning, and the accumulation of knowledge. Its members — generally well-bred individuals of means, with the occasional remarkable but "disadvantaged" individual elevated via patronage — are watchers and students in the foremost, with an insatiable desire to *know more*.

As with much of the Arcanum's efforts, the org has an informal hierarchy of where its interests lie, which usually skews toward the practice of magic and the presence of the spirits of the departed. This hierarchy changes, but not often, generally after a grand assembly of high-ranking members and esteemed chapterhouse leaders deem it so after much debate and discussion over a decade's findings. The wheels of occult academia turn slowly.

At the foundation of the Arcanum's classification as an org is how it functions in the practical sense. Set aside for a moment its internal struggles about what to do with its vast annals of information. Ultimately, it's a secret society funded by individuals of extreme wealth, walling off their discoveries from the world's betterment (and even each other), for the sake of nothing other than basking in the accumulation of knowledge. This is key to many Hunters' frustration with the Arcanum: Imagine the good the org might do if it used its discoveries (not to mention its wealth) to push back the veil of night rather than pat itself on the back for how daring and clever it is.

Key Personnel

- **Morag Holmscroft**, Grand Chancellor and inheritor of the Holmscroft estates, with an unclear relationship to Benjamen Holmscroft (deceased)
- **Sandeep D'Souza**, Chancellor of the New Delhi chapterhouse, who was passed over for the Grand Chancellor's role when Morag Holmscroft claimed it
- **Claude Murray**, Emeritus of Thaumatology and descendant of original Arcanum member Winthrop Murray
- **Anat Osman**, Journey-fellow database administrator, conducting an unsanctioned digitization of the Cairo chapterhouse archives
- **Agent Unknown**, investigator into the collapse of the Boston chapterhouse after its infiltration by vampires

Operation

Structured as a matrix organization, the Arcanum consists of geographic- or personnel-based groups, as well as fields of particular study. For example, a chapterhouse exists in a certain location and consists of specific individuals, while the overall fields of Hermetic Studies, Archaeology, or Parapsychology include members from around the world. The Arcanum itself isn't what would be traditionally considered a "secret society," but rather exists in the open, even if individual members choose to hide their own participation. A university might have a chapter, for example, or a specific city might be home to a greater chapterhouse.

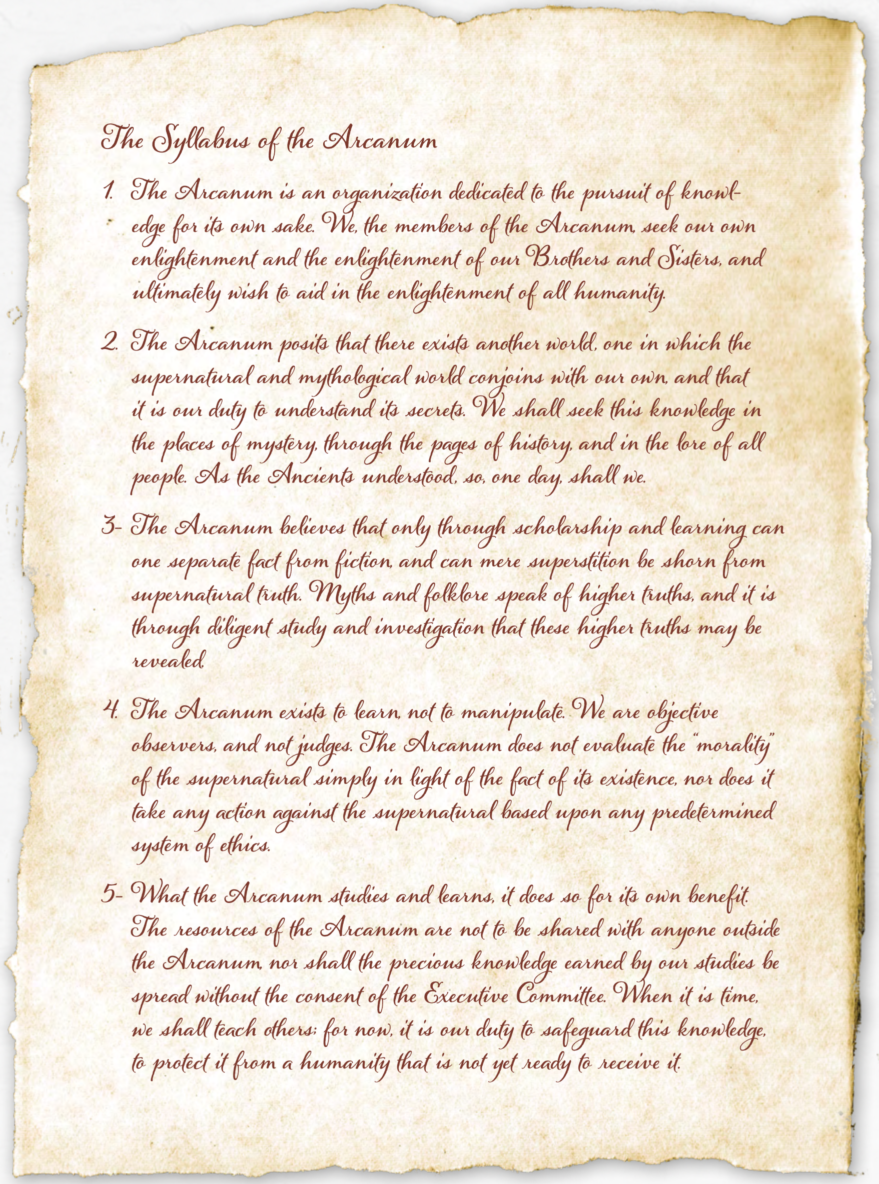
Geographically, chapterhouses are the most prominent and prestigious facilities in the org's purview. Beneath these are colonies, which are effectively less-permanent chapterhouses or chapterhouses that haven't yet attained their own autonomy and answer up the chain. An individual group of Arcanum scholars is known as a lodge; scholar-members themselves are called Arcanists.

Befitting an occult society, the organization's ranks consist of a number of mysterious and often conflicting hierarchies and internal factions. Levels of advancement mark each Arcanist's "Journey," from Neophyte through Elder and on up to the Grand Chancellor. The Grand Chancellor's estate is headquartered in England, at Vannevar Hall, the ancestral abode of founding member Benjamen Holmscroft.

As one can see, the Arcanum greatly appreciates structures, titles, and order.

Chapterhouses exist wherever a preponderance of consistent, significant, and observable supernatural phenomena merit them, including such places as Vienna, New Delhi, Washington, D.C., Berlin, and an exceptionally secure chapterhouse in Cairo. A colony might spring up wherever such phenomena have yet to demonstrate longevity, and a lodge might visit anywhere something strange happens, for further investigation.

In terms of actual ops, the Arcanum employs a variety of nontraditional methods, or at least methods in stark contrast to the more direct tactics of other orgs. Arcanists glean much from observation and posterity, researching primary and secondary sources, and sometimes even breaking and entering to collect and research oddments from a creature's lair. Where they can risk getting close to occult creatures, conversationally savvy members of the Arcanum prefer social engineering. Supernatural individuals may be vain or even lonely, and often don't realize how much they reveal to (in their minds) prey, especially if they don't know that prey is actually observing them. "Let me buy you a drink," says the vampire, and proceeds to bind their "prey" in a veil of mystery — all while the Arcanist makes mental notes and assiduously avoids eye contact.



The Syllabus of the Arcanum

1. The Arcanum is an organization dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. We, the members of the Arcanum, seek our own enlightenment and the enlightenment of our Brothers and Sisters, and ultimately wish to aid in the enlightenment of all humanity.

2. The Arcanum posits that there exists another world, one in which the supernatural and mythological world conjoins with our own, and that it is our duty to understand its secrets. We shall seek this knowledge in the places of mystery, through the pages of history, and in the lore of all people. As the Ancients understood, so, one day, shall we.

3- The Arcanum believes that only through scholarship and learning can one separate fact from fiction, and can mere superstition be shorn from supernatural truth. Myths and folklore speak of higher truths, and it is through diligent study and investigation that these higher truths may be revealed.

4. The Arcanum exists to learn, not to manipulate. We are objective observers, and not judges. The Arcanum does not evaluate the "morality" of the supernatural simply in light of the fact of its existence, nor does it take any action against the supernatural based upon any predetermined system of ethics.

5- What the Arcanum studies and learns, it does so for its own benefit. The resources of the Arcanum are not to be shared with anyone outside the Arcanum, nor shall the precious knowledge earned by our studies be spread without the consent of the Executive Committee. When it is time, we shall teach others; for now, it is our duty to safeguard this knowledge, to protect it from a humanity that is not yet ready to receive it.

Complications

Rooted in an anachronistic and elitist regard for academia as a privilege, the Arcanum elicits a feeling of an "old-guard" org whose time has passed. This isn't quite true in practice: If anything, its time is in the process of passing rather than being as now a fait accompli. Still, the org's wood-paneled libraries, generational membership, and inflexible customs make the org feel like a secret society from a century past. It struggles with this nightly, as a handful of visionary young members favoring modern technologies and methods quietly clashes with superannuated members for whom tradition is the basis of the Syllabus. While it may seem preposterous that progress against strange sorceries is held back by a handful of gray-bearded old sirs with ivory tobacco pipes and satin smoking jackets, nothing moves forward without the smoking-jacket contingent's funding.

A great and overweening pride characterizes many of the ranking members of the Arcanum, to the point where the individual desire for knowledge skirts the realm of interference. In fact, the history of the Arcanum is rife with Arcanists who proved susceptible to the temptations of the supernatural, and themselves took up practices of sorcery, vampiric blood decoction, and even pacts with those strange glamour-seeking entities at the edges of reality. To be fair, Arcanists very rarely want to be the creatures into whose worlds they voyeuristically peer — rather, they want the power without the costs, knowledge itself being an unquenchable thirst.

The Arcanum has a number of long-standing rivalries with other orgs, and one with the Society of St. Leopold in particular. It's not above using rival orgs to advance its information-gathering efforts, but to date hasn't yet performed anything so dire as plundering their databases, which young members attribute to the possible fact that the old guard has no idea what a database is, as opposed to any moral high ground. Similarly, the Arcanum is willing to use individual Hunter cells to advance its information archives, albeit with less framing as a rivalry. Cells are little more than "the help," after all, when they're not active obstacles.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

EYES ON THE PRIZE

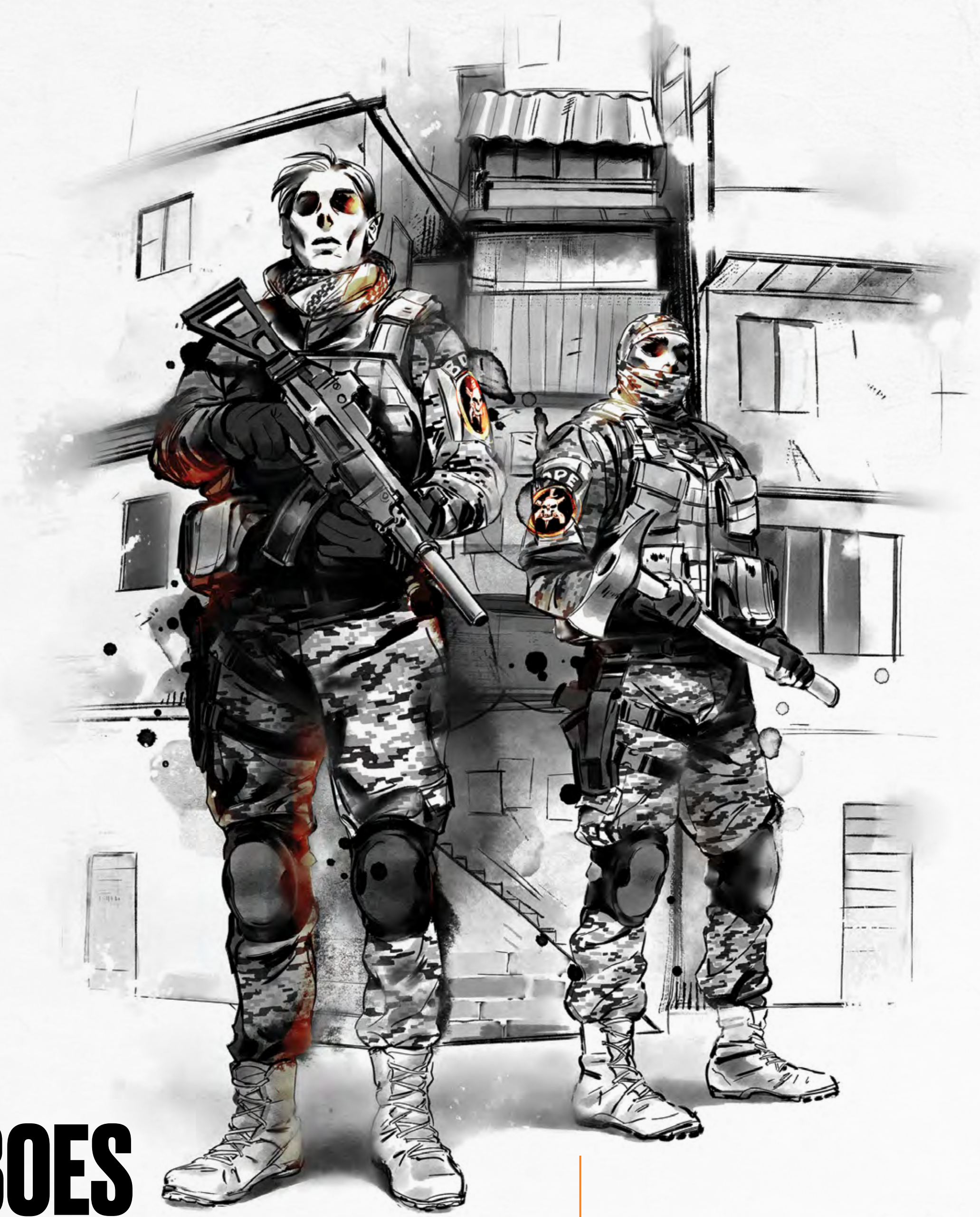
A worried individual approaches the Hunters' cell with some strange artifact, which the players' characters recognize as being supernatural in origin. In truth, the artifact seems to be a locus for ghosts, but the supposed victim is a member of the Arcanum, and a potent haunt had learned that the Arcanum was in possession of it. The plan is to dump off the mysterious trinket on the Hunters and watch how the ghosts divine its location — and what they do to the Hunters who retrieve it. When the dust has settled, the ghosts are mollified, and/ or the Hunters are dead, the Arcanist intends to retrieve the artifact.

FRIEND OR FOE

One of the Hunters' Touchstones receives an invitation to join the Arcanum (including a stipend, if they're of limited means). The invitation seems like an excellent opportunity, but threatens to drive a wedge between them, as the relationship with the Touchstone changes, the latter seeking more and more information from the Hunter about their various quarry and Hunts. How does the Hunter react to obviously being used, especially when other facets of the Touchstone's personality remain the same? How does the rest of the cell deal with the individual who may well be a future rival in training, and the Hunter who's potentially positioning them to be a threat down the road?

ANGEL INVESTMENT

While investigating especially puissant quarry, the Hunters gain intel from an anonymous benefactor, no strings (seemingly) attached. It happens again on their next Hunt, and the benefactor reveals herself to be Anat, operating out of the Cairo chapterhouse, and she's looking for confirmation of the archive material she's sending to the cell. It seems like a fruitful relationship until Anat's superiors learn what she's doing, and demand that the Hunters relinquish all information and any physical "evidence" they've gained from every quarry they've hunted, regardless of whether or not Anat's information applied to those Hunts. Not acceding would align a very wealthy rival against the cell, and there's very little to be lost by kicking back that information, right? And just how did Anat know what the cell was up to in the first place, come to think of it?



BOPE-RJ (BOES of Rio de Janeiro)

Government Org

Across all of Brazil's Special Police Operations, only one is the original, the most well trained, the most feared, the most experienced and, especially, the most effective in inner-city warfare — which happens to include vampire hunting. Not long after their establishment, this org became a model to other special commands. Itself frequently in real combat situations, no other military unit in the whole wide world engages in so much urban combat as frequently as this org does. And since the blankbodies are mostly city creatures, they are the ultimate sagradas of the org, BOES. In fact, all Secret Special Operations was organized mirroring their structure and modus operandi. Their icon is *faca na caveira* — "knife on the skull," and their uniforms bear this symbol over crossed pistols in their badges. For this reason they each go by the name caveira - skull, because they have achieved "victory over death" (and, among the vampire-hunting veterans of the org, the undead).

This storied organization is, of course, the police tactical unit of the military police of Rio de Janeiro State, the *Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais*, a.k.a. BOPE, the *carioca* Elite Squad of Brazil's organized monster hunters.

And with the org's expertise and strength of the Catholic Church in Brazil comes the perfect opportunity for partnership with the Society of St. Leopold and other Coalition forces in the crusade against the creatures of the night.

In cities across the vast country that is Brazil, BOES' primary occupation is to protect critical infrastructure, such as government buildings, the homes of the wealthy, corporate headquarters and assets, and even military installations. By strictest definition, BOES do not want to cause war in large urban areas, where SPOB soldiers are often regarded as occupying forces. But Rio de Janeiro is a unique city. To that end, there is BOPE-RJ.

Created in 1978 in a city where more people are killed per year than most countries in war, trained for combat in various situations and for hostage rescue, BOPE's greatest mission, in theory, is to save lives. In truth, they are notorious: Their well-documented use of deadly force and violence have garnered international attention and critics decry them for year-round public massacres.

Key Personnel

- **Ten. Col. Eugênio dos Anjos A.K.A. "Eugênio Principado,"** Commander of the Battalion
- **Capitão Carlos Justino**, field captain and the finest trainer among BOPE-RJ
- **Capitão Mateus Aquiles**, field captain, particularly despises "freelance" Hunters
- **Sargento Hélio Rocha**, steel-eyed leader of the caveiras de cristo, and seeks to transform BOPE-RJ as a Neopentecostal org in the model of the Society of St. Leopold
- **Praça Tomás Benjamin**, a rising star among the field soldiers and one of the best marksmen in BOPE
- **Senador Hugo César Marvote**, former lieutenant colonel commanding BOPE, and a noteworthy influence in the battalion in social media, who departed the force to undertake a career in politics

Operation

It's no exaggeration to say that the BOPE-RJ recruitment and training is one of the most hostile, arduous, selective, and challenging of all contemporary military units. And with the Leopoldite-backed anti-vampire mandate it pursues, it's also one of the the most soulless and perverse.Training begins with what is called the "*mês do inferno*" (month of hell) or simply "*inferno*." Despite the name, this military police training program is actually a four-month period including sniper instruction, ambush training, self-defense, patrol conduct, mountaineering, sea survival, first aid, weaponry, hostage situations, and a variety of other high-risk situations.

Each one of the candidates receives a number, by which they are known instead of their names, and endures a host of stressful situations: They are sleep deprived, substitute meals for hard exercises, spend several days in the woods performing activities such as long marches by foot, on horseback, bareback riding, training combats against more than one opponent at the same time. Trainees even sleep together, wet and naked in the cold. This process promotes fewer than four candidates from a group of 50.

The intention here, as the BOPE coaches would say, "is to disqualify those considered too psychologically and morally weak to become *caveira*." On the other hand, while training to "better control their aggressiveness, while forming a new sense of fellowship and brotherhood," they risk a sense of de-individuation of the remaining candidates, replacing the sense of self with the principles of the force (see below). Much like a fanatical sect, they are reborn as a *caveira* to fulfil the sacred mission of the command, and also increasing their chances to survive an encounter with blankbodies.

After passing the inferno and graduating, BOPE deploys its *caveiras* daily to patrol in risky areas, where they make use of training that includes urban tactics, shooting, rappelling, parachuting, embarking and disembarking moving vehicles, blind-fighting, weapons maintenance and reconnaissance, mountaineering and climbing, as well as strict discipline and physical exercises in extreme situations. They use this broad array of skills to impose order in the city — and when it matters, trained *caveiras* are able even to surprise the most well-entrenched vampire or to evacuate victims-to-be.

Effectively, the BOPE runs as a hybrid of military and conventional police and also as hunters for BOES' *Sagradas*. Operations demand techniques for both dealing with human threats and the obscure and exotic maneuvers and tactics for dealing with (primarily vampiric) supernatural menaces. Certainly, it's an elite force, but nonetheless one that's frequently exposed to situations that they can't explain afterward, or that deal with "enhanced human capacity demonstrating bestial behaviors."

During their operations, BOPE-RJ gathers primary-source intel about vampires and in particular on how to identify and destroy them, which it shares (incompletely...) with other Coalition agencies. They also occasionally find themselves dispatched to protect Entity agents assigned to perform the *Auto-da-Fé* and other Leopoldite functions. And although BOPE-RJ receives instruction in human rights, communication with the public, and body language, including UN protocols on how to treat civilians and course study from professionals in the fields of law, sociology, and psychology, the org's main focus on urban warfare and their sacred belief of saving humanity from the blankbodies never changes, making much of it *pro forma*.

BOPE-RJ gained a significant boost to its funding during Rio's hosting of the 2016 Olympics, resulting in upgrades to equipment, vehicles, and weapons, and has been reluctant to cease claiming that funding annually, as is typical of org operations. Other changes to protocol: The *caveiras* no longer use their signature black fatigues on their operations, instead now using the MARPAT Digital Woodland fatigues, which is the same worn by the United States Marine Corps. In addition to material quality upgrade and tactical ease-of-use improvements, since Rio has one of the biggest urban forests in the world, the uniform change makes it much easier to approach a target from green urban areas. They also protect their faces with the *keffiyeh* scarf, which together with a balaclava give more protection against dust and sun exposure.

The Commandments of BOPE-RJ

Controlled Aggressiveness, Emotional Control, Conscious Discipline, Spirit of Body, Flexibility, Honesty, Initiative, Loyalty, Leadership, Perseverance, Versatility

Complications

Notably, BOPE-RJ uses a very similar set of combat tactics against the terrorists of their remit as well as vampires, which they actively hunt. As with most orgs, the majority of the troop doesn't always know exactly what they're hunting. And for many agents of the org, this comes at the cost of losing their own sense of humanity and empathy along the way.

While a certain amount of public opinion approves BOPE-RJ's methods as "necessary," a significant proportion of the population, international media and, of course, human rights NGOs have made much of the org's use of violence and torture, massacres of surrendered criminals, and innocent casualties. For some time they saw themselves apart from the corrupted *carioca's* military police, upholding themselves as uncompromised. But after scandals involving bribery, corruption, leaking information, and supplying weapons to criminals, the org struggled internally with moral integrity and autonomy against parallel forces of neo-Pentecostal narco-militias.

Those clued into the movements of the supernatural have expressed some fear that higher levels of BOPE-RJ leadership are compromised, and are subtly influenced by the very blankbodies they hunt to destroy the org from within. And BOES keeps a vigilant eye on BOPE-RJ as the "best of their best" for any sign of external motivation.

As a particularly cruel facet of its social control, BOPE maintains outsized patrol and response in the *favelas* (the name used to describe sprawling communities of poor and indigent citizens, with low housing quality and weak property rights in Rio). They move quietly but forcefully into these territories where org agents advance through the alleys, using techniques like "slicing the pie." The term refers to a progression, i.e. when a *caveira* enters a risky area and has the cover of another until he reaches the objective — ostensibly where criminals or blankbodies have holed up or where weapons, drugs, or other contraband may be found — oftentimes in what turn out to be nests for the undead. Overall, the human rights concerns complicate what would otherwise be a straightforward search for vampires. Harsh economic conditions have made for communities that may have to turn outside the law to feed themselves, which the org then punishes for having the temerity to try to survive. Of course, vampiric predators are drawn to the places where they're best able to run rampant, and the poor suffer at the hands of the org and the bloodsuckers because of it.

Then again, at other times, the hyper-aggressive org simply drops the pretenses, storming violently and destructively into the *favelas*, with helicopters and armored vehicles. Their targets are the narcotics traffickers or militia and their foot soldiers; and among them happen to be a disproportionate number of blankbodies and the debased mortal cults that spring up around them. The result is inevitably a trail of blood, corpses, ashes and burned-out buildings.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

HAMMERS AND NAILS

The most straightforward way players' Hunters might encounter BOPE-RJ (or even other BOES units) is as a direct physical threat. As literal instruments of state violence, *caveiras* may perceive the cell (especially if the players' characters are well-armed) as a literal terrorist cell and attempt to neutralize them. Hell, they may even know the Hunters for what they are and attempt to neutralize them. Similarly, BOPE-RJ might be actively interested in the same quarry the cell is hunting, as each group attempts to use the other to weaken the supernatural creature and then claim success after the fact. The supernatural quarry, of course, has no interest in being taken down by weak, fleshly goons with guns.

ONE TRUE WAY

A subset among "the elite of the elite," some BOPE-RJ operators have trained mutually with La Entita and other Leopoldite agents. A proper understanding of mystical imbuements comes in handy, especially against blankbodies who are becoming increasingly savvy to "Second Inquisition-era tactics," as certain vampires have described them. Although many of BOPE's hunters use some Christian or ecumenical protections, a (even more) hardline faction inside BOPE-RJ known as *caveiras de cristo* (skulls of Christ) is burgeoning, separate from the predominantly Catholic majority of the org. Some individuals and even entire BOPE-RJ units prefer more fundamentalist evangelical churches' motives and iconography, an even wearing talismans and fetishes that ridicule and demonize the Afro-Brazilian religions, a usual practice of one of the strands of these neo-Pentecostal churches. The players' characters may find themselves targeted especially because of Faithful backgrounds they may have — but they may also be able to turn the rival BOPE factions against each other at a critical moment.

BACK TO THE BAG

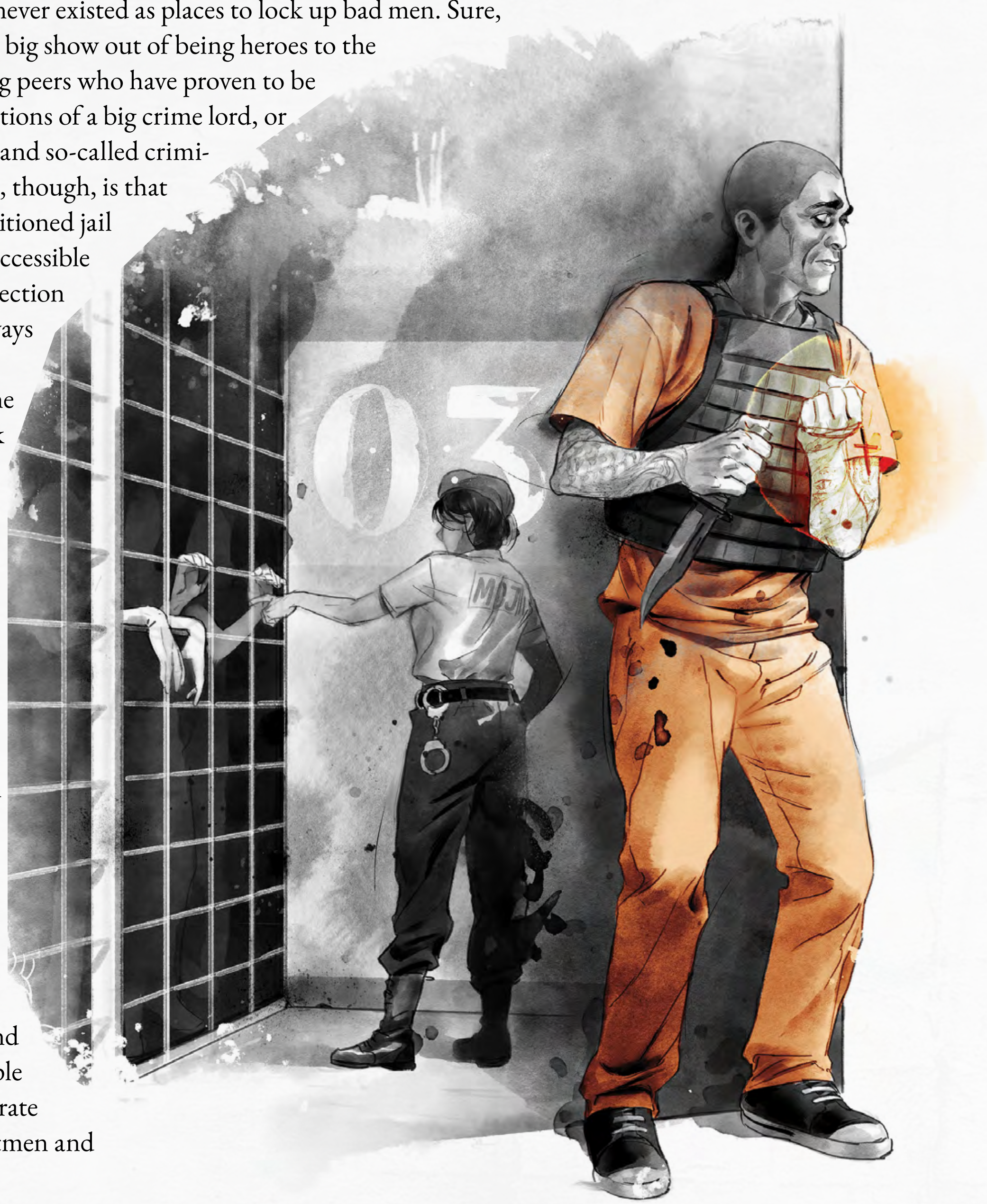
Once *caveira*, always *caveira*. Despite its street-level power, a military police officer has few options outside the force: Low pay, few social and emotional outlets, no support from the state or his own peers, omnipresent corruption, and the supernatural threats themselves take their toll. The highest rate of police deaths hails from this institution, whether being killed in action or at their own hands — and no wonder, given its stresses. Even though the org brings recognition among other hunters, loyalty and unquestioning order-following are expected. After all, that's what they were intensely trained and prepared for. The players' Hunters may discover a cache belonging to a fallen agent (itself worthy of investigation) that points them toward particularly elusive quarry… at the same time it brings them to the attention of the org's own investigation into the death.

Manila Department of Justice: Special Rehabilitation Program

Government Org

Jails in the Philippines have never existed as places to lock up bad men. Sure, administrations will make a big show out of being heroes to the Filipino people and arresting peers who have proven to be "corrupt," or busting up the operations of a big crime lord, or cleaning the streets of degenerates and so-called criminals in the making. The truth of it, though, is that political figures get cushy air-conditioned jail cells with every creature comfort accessible to them while they wait for next election season, and crime lords almost always manage to make their own little kingdoms within the premises. The "degenerates" are often simple folk who spoke ill of the government, or some unlucky sods that police decided to arrest for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or — worse yet — the fall guy for some middle-class or rich brat whose family paid theirs to be a stand-in and do some time.

Inmates can reduce their sentence in many ways, and almost all of them are very illegal. Wardens who answer to some bigshot from the outside regularly fish suitable candidates out to do free labor for folks who won't ask too many questions. Gangsters in Manila, warlords from the provinces beyond the city, and crooked businesspeople are always on the market for desperate individuals they can send off as hitmen and



bruisers. Those sorts return to their cells the moment the job's done, effectively making them disappear, and confounding good cops and private investigators alike.

The one legal way to work for one's freedom if you don't have the money, the means, or the friends in high places is the Special Rehabilitation Program. And for all intents and purposes, it probably shouldn't be legal, either.

One particular branch of the Department of Justice's SRP is a cover for the Philippines' government-sanctioned hunter org. The PR-friendly explanation is that the President recognizes prisoner's rights, the value of restorative justice, and the plight of ex-inmates who find that they can't rebuild their lives after doing their time. In reality, the authors of the Program wanted to kill two birds with one stone: Stop their rivals from using inmates for their own purposes by monopolizing the supply, and have the means to cull supernatural threats within Manila. Bonafide Hunters, such as the *babaylan* and *albularyo* of old, are hard to come by and will rarely bend the knee to a government organization to begin with. Thankfully, "motivated" hunters armed with guns can make for an adequate substitute.

Albularyo:	"Herbalist" is both an approximation and a reduction of what these folks do. Doctors who heal diseases, especially ones that result from curses and foul magic, through herbs and ritual.
Babaylan:	Intermediaries between mortals and s pirits/the dead and the living, dancing on the lines that separate the different realms.

Key Personnel

- **Charo Bahaghari**, Chairman
- **Liana Panilio**, Head of Operations, liaises with external parties and hands out missions for hunters in the Program
- **Attorney Dio Malaahas**, Legal Compliance, handles the cleanup in the wake of SRP operations and does all the Program's dirty work on call
- **Roy Sison**, Human Resources, does the rounds of the Manila jails, picking out candidates for the SRP
- **Special Agent Petrik Barrion**, Lead Trainer, mentors new candidates and handles general training for all agents

Operation

The Special Rehabilitation Program operates out of a small, gated compound sandwiched between the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). To outsiders, the place looks like police barracks with training facilities. Most of the SRP's real facilities are underground, located in three secure basement levels.

SRP's hunter pool is divided between the Program's legitimate agents — specialists who came into the life willingly, operate on the government's payroll and assets provided by generous private sponsors, and can leave whenever they wish — and patients, "hunters" who were taken from the various jails in the metropolis and work whatever jobs they're given to earn their freedom. What the public knows is that patients are given jobs under government supervision and participate in highly progressive rehabilitation regimens in order to reintroduce them to society once their prison sentences conclude. In truth, there is no rehab: Patients are sent out on jobs with an agent handler from top side, and they handle the monsters of the night that stalk Manila's streets. Occasionally, patients of the Program are sent out for photo ops, where their superiors put them in the distinct jumpsuits of the jail they came from, make them do some menial but beneficial work like street cleaning or taking out trash, and snap photos for the press.

When they're not on the job, patients return to their prison cells and are expected to lay low until their handlers fetch them. They're expected to keep the SRP's secrets, even if it means lying to fellow inmates about the nature of their work, and severe state violence backs this secrecy. Human Resources does what it can to make patients comfortable where they are without being too obvious about it, but they're not above cutting a particularly troublesome patient loose if they have to.

It's not unheard of for a patient to come to the SRP because they're the fall guy for a more privileged *actual* lawbreaker, or even for a family member or loved one of theirs. In cases like this, the original patient may not have the mental or physical faculties to participate in the Program (or buy their way out of it), but the "volunteer" in question did, and was willing to do the work to set them free. Legal Compliance and Human Resources team up to arrange for a quiet release of the original patient, and — when necessary — fabricate mundane criminal charges for their new agent.

SRP hunters handle any case that comes to their doorstep, and operate like detectives do with the occasional intrusion of the supernatural. They don't employ (or even often have) a lot of specialized knowledge, and rarely have adequate means to handle a supernatural threat. Most de facto hunters must get by with their wits, their body armor, and whatever weaponry the Program trusts in the hands of convicted criminals. This is a significant factor in the high attrition rate of the SRP, but the sorts who come to their doorstep are often desperate enough to try.

Complications

As with most government entities in Manila, funding for the SRP changes with the weather. Since the start of their operations in the 1960s, the Program has had lean seasons where they could barely afford mundane ammunition, and golden eras where everyone, even the patients, got freebies from big brands and *lechón* for lunch. On average, they've got the same resources as the Philippine National Police (PNP): funded just enough, with little wiggle room for distinguished agents because many of the SRP's officers love to pad their own salaries as a gift to themselves.

Patients each have a personal scoreboard that counts as their credit within the Program, and they must work thrice as hard as agents compared to their peers, and — should they survive the Program — simply get cut loose once they've done their time. They don't receive any kind of pension, because for all intents and purposes they never existed as government workers on record, and were wards of the state for the entirety of their hunting career. An ex-patient would be lucky if one of their superiors took pity on them and sent them off with something to help them restart their lives. Few patients see any significant volume of supernatural activity; fewer still survive beyond casual contact or multiple investigations into actual supernatural activity.

Internal pressure and politicking in the SRP is troublesome, to say the least. To make matters worse, the Program is rather short on allies across the board. The working relationship the SRP has with its mundane counterparts in the NBI and the PNP in difficult times might as well be nonexistent. Although the judicial officers of the country are expected to give their full cooperation to caretakers of the Program, many entities within both the NBI and the PNP are backed by politicians and bigwigs who would rather bury the Program entirely. A connected individual might have a friendly cop or two at their back, but the moment their financiers tell them to abandon a Program patient or agent, they'll have no choice but to do it or risk their own careers. It doesn't help, of course, that the supernatural bureau of the Program is a secret to most everybody in the Department of Justice.

There's also the perpetual question of the SRP's legitimacy itself. From region to region and island to island, the Philippines is home to many communities — often centered around one or two families — who are themselves practitioners of magic and shamanism. While this contributes greatly to a general public acceptance that supernatural phenomena can be as real as real gets, this doesn't do patients or agents of the Program any favors. Many Filipinos who consider themselves true practitioners generally abhor SRP hunters, and they are often willing to show their disapproval with open hostility if they feel like an agent or patient from the Program is stepping into their territory.

The Catholic Church and other Christian groups are no great friends to the SRP either. Hunters from groups like the Philippine Office of Exorcism and Society of St. Leopold believe that no other soldier can wage war against the supernatural like they can, and stolidly refuse to offer their expertise to SRP's trainers. Whenever patients and their handlers encounter these zealots on the job, they can expect to receive a spiel about walking further down the path to Hell and offers of salvation in the form of recruitment. Suffice to say, more than a few patients have "defected" in search of God.

Some officers within the SRP really do believe in the cause and honestly think that they're doing patients a service by giving them a shade of honest work, but they are a few good (and rather misguided) people in an overall corrupt system. Furthermore, the SRP has its fair share of mundane detractors and enemies. Many crooked individuals of influence in Manila aren't happy that the Program cut into their supply of grunts, and they can be just as nasty as any angry *mangkukulam*, blood-drinking fiend, or plague-spirit.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

BACK ON THE JOB

One of the players' characters has been contacted by a contact who's with the SRP. The Program unwittingly uncovered the operations of a vampire "patron's" cartel, and their agents are struggling to deal with the threat. The current administration is keen to cut the Program loose, as certain political figures in the city are being encouraged by their underworld backers to let the SRP sink. Hunters with appropriate relationships may wish to help their former mentors (or proteges), or may decide that the ex-patient is somebody they owe a favor to, testing the personal nature of the relationship against the shadow of the org.

NO MOURNING, NO FUNERALS

Over the last two months, numerous patients have been discovered dead in their cells after taking jobs with their handlers. So far, the SRP's discreet investigation points toward a vengeful ghost the Program believed it had dealt with sometime ago, but more supernaturally inclined folks in and beyond Manila aren't willing to help them out. The players' Hunters are called in as freelancers… but what if they have connections with one of the groups in the city who've got beef with the SRP?

THEY CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH

An intrepid foreign journalist looking to bag a Pulitzer has gathered some hard-nosed local friends of theirs and started sniffing around the SRP's operations. At present, they believe that the Program is responsible for committing extrajudicial killings for the Philippine government, a lie unwittingly substantiated by their discovery of old jobs that the Program wasn't able to clean up as well as they had hoped. They're making enough noise about it to worry the Program's top dogs, but since their hands are tied, they're on the market for some independent Hunters to help them. Exonerating the SRP is a quandary in and of itself, but how can the players' Hunters prove the existence of the supernatural without being made to look like crackpots by the journo?

Monster-X

Corporate Org

If you read the slick literature, Monster-X is the brainchild of serial entrepreneur and visionary investor Evelina Budrys. In reality, Monster-X started in a basement in Bergen, Norway, under appropriately strange circumstances and was purchased quickly thereafter, its original founder having very publicly retired after making the sale.

Unlike many of the other orgs, Monster-X exists to exert control as a secondary function. Its primary function is to sell goods and services related to the investigation and securement of paranormal phenomena. Naturally, the services make sense: If you've witnessed supernatural activity, Monster-X techs can come out and make some attempt to deal with it for you. They're not particularly knowledgeable about the occult, and they're often woefully undertrained, but the attempt is there.

The goods, however, are where Monster-X makes significant ancillary profit. The company has a research and development lab where it not only develops technologies that enable its operators to pursue the supernatural, it also develops consumer products that individuals can purchase to protect themselves and their homes with varying degrees of functionality. It sounds crass because it is crass.

It's also at the heart of a conflict growing within the company. Some of Monster-X's influential staff believe the corporate remit to be one of developing technologies augmented by the supernatural. Some of Monster-X's leadership believe it to be selling lifestyle or novelty.

There's no arguing the fact that some Monster-X technology actually works. Indeed, some other orgs actually use Monster-X technology, especially in the field (particularly the consumer-grade stuff). There's also no arguing that some of its offering is all but snake oil. Monster-X has a legitimately functional blood centrifuge that can distinguish between human blood and that of "anomalous hematophages." At the same time, it sells shotgun shells packed with garlic salt, particularly in the North and South American markets.

That unfortunate dichotomy is also present among its operators. Some are savvy veterans, well-versed in the finer details and practical tactics of the Hunt, while others are neophytes newly recruited to replace fallen team members or people in personal straits who answered a hyperfocused online ad and can't quite believe that they're getting paid to do this weird shit (right up until the weird shit tears them in half or spiritually possesses the customer).

The entire operation is so new that no one knows what to make of it yet. Obviously, it's a cash grab, and any number of web videos debunking the company's patented methodology (not actually patented) can be found with a bit of filtered searching. At the same time, the central lab in Lomé is producing a handful of tools for discovering and inhibiting the behavior of supernatural creatures that tomorrow's legitimate Hunters might have a genuine reason to use. It's not mass-producing them — yet — but that's because demand hasn't yet risen... and that's an entirely separate facet of Monster-X's business. Phase Two awaits.

SECOND STRING

Monster-X bears a bit of a stigma among the orgs, many of whom deride its field operators as "the pizza delivery drivers." For their part, few of Monster-X's operators are aware of this stigma, as many of them don't even know about the other orgs unless they have some reason to cross paths with them. Monster-X operators may be clueless rookies or world-weary veterans, and only each individual contract will reveal which. To that end, the players' Hunters may resent the intrusion of the profit-motivated org at the same time they feel a sympathy toward its individual operators' circumstances.

Key Personnel

- **Evelina Budrys**, CEO and cryptocurrency speculator
- **Yusuf Ghanem**, CTO, runs the Monster-X development lab center in Togo
- **Patricia Abalo**, board member and Director of Business Development
- **Felix Bull**, veteran field agent
- **Kasper Chin**, founder, retired, believed deceased

Operation

Monster-X is widely perceived to be an American company, but it's a true multinational, with offices wherever it finds the most exploitable tax incentives. Founded in Norway, now headquartered in the US, developing technology in Africa, testing new equipment in "emerging markets," and officially incorporated on Cayman Brac, Monster-X has franchises in many major cities worldwide. Most of these are small, and the terms of franchising see many locations close quickly, lending a somewhat predatory, fly-by-night nature to the customer-facing business.

And a strange business it is. On the one hand, most of the company founders and board genuinely believe in the supernatural, though not all have had direct experience with the occult world. On the other hand, the very nature of that occult world inspires staff and shareholders to be very selective about how the company positions itself. Too much acknowledgement of the supernatural threat will "turn the opportunity space red" and invite governmental attention — and therefore regulation. Too little acknowledgement of what the Monster-X operation does and it can't turn a profit. So the result is a precarious "boutique solutions" outfit aimed at people wealthy and discreet enough to seek out its services, but not so high-visibility as to attract too much attention from regulatory entities or factions of supernatural creatures with the organized power to do anything about it.

Employing a proprietary containment protocol (which it franchises), Monster-X sends operators on demand to investigate and secure supernatural threats. Part of securing threats is taking possession of the supernatural entity and any byproduct, detritus, or other substances left in the wake of the crisis management site — Monster-X hauls away the monster and the mess it leaves behind, claiming ownership thereof. This material it brings back to its facilities for research, from which its objective is to develop a line of consumer goods.

This last is behind the high rate of franchise closings. If a location collects a suitable quantity of high-quality research material, the parent company promptly buys out the franchise, so as to not draw attention to that location and invite competitors. The material goes to the development lab in Togo. The company maintains a few operators to observe the site, perform follow-up visits, and when necessary discredit any further non-company investigations into the occurrence.

Complications

The greatest shortcoming Monster-X faces is that it's already cutting costs, and its proprietary equipment isn't up to the tasks the org undertakes. While the company isn't afraid to pay big salaries to what it perceives to be specialized engineers, those engineers are working with inadequate research material, given the imprecise and inherently rare and secretive nature of the supernatural. Literally, not enough "stuff" comes back from most jobs in order for the engineers to reverse-engineer anything from it. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

At the same time, Monster-X pays low salaries for field operators, especially given the extraordinarily high risk involved in the role. By ratio, the company has the most employees in this role — some are even per-job contractors, and not employees proper — and shareholders of course want to control their labor costs to reap those savings themselves, so Monster-X makes up for in sheer numbers of operators what each lacks in expertise. It's… not precisely a winning combination in terms of actual monster-hunting, but with the number of subsidies and shelters the company takes advantage of, it works, so long as the primary objective is increasing share value and not eliminating quarry.

So, yeah, it's a shell game.

In practice, this means that Monster-X hunters have equipment of varying efficacy and quality — some simply doesn't work, some malfunctions dramatically, and some works just fine. And the motives of the Monster-X hunters may not be elimination, but capture and harvest, so that the woefully underprepared agents can bring back case studies from which the engineers can research new technologies to support field work… and to develop consumer goods to sell to home-defense enthusiasts.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

IF AT FIRST…

The Hunters are hired in (or discover) the aftermath of a botched Monster-X hunt. At least, it's a failure in terms of what the poor victim wanted; by terms of the Monster-X contract, they got in, got their samples, and got out. Now what's left is an angry Oh, God, what the hell is that thing that's been alerted to the presence of Hunters and knows that someone's after it. Maybe this gadget the Monster-X jobbers left behind can be useful?

PROCUREMENT OPS

After a successful Hunt, the cell is approached by a Monster-X account executive who offers a tantalizing price on anything they may have collected after said hunt: a creature carcass, fluids or tissue, less-definable stuff. If the cell is successful again, the same account exec offers another premium. If there's a third successful Hunt (cause for celebration in and of itself), the account exec suggests a buyout or a franchise arrangement, which may seem like a prayer answered, especially for a cell chronically low on resources. If the cell isn't interested, the account exec becomes aggressive, and future Hunts will likely be complicated by the presence of Monster-X contractors. If the cell is interested, they'll very quickly find themselves taken away from the Hunts that concern them directly, and turned toward Hunts to which the inscrutable "headquarters" assigns them — which almost certainly conflicts with personal goals and motives.

CASTLE DOCTRINE

The players' Hunters may not directly encounter Monster-X field operatives, but may instead investigate a site that's been "protected" by a number of Monster-X point-defense gewgaws. Ranging from everything from non-functional junk to something perfectly capable of lacerating a limb, these defense contraptions create a significant hazard in the dealing-with of the actual quarry. And the quarry may or may not be hampered by them depending on their nature — a desperate resident may well have trapped the basement with something intended to cripple a "werewolf," when the true problem is a vengeful spectre.

The Nails of Christ

Religious Org

Historical accounts of *Kataastaasan, Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* ("The Supreme and Venerable Association of the Children of the Nation") — shortened to KKK, or the *Katipunan* — often cite the pseudo-religious undertones of the revolutionary movement, and describe how high levels of superstition, religious fervor, and patriotism inspired *Katipuneros* during their attempts at overthrowing the Spanish regime in the Philippines. The Christian themes of blood, self-sacrifice, and revolution as found in the Passion of Christ served the movement well, and leaders reputedly encouraged this because it was something that their general membership were familiar with and could later identify with personally. Men and women who believed that their cause was a holy cause fought harder and could better inspire others to follow in their stead.

In truth, organized Religious sympathizers who were hiding among the leadership of the *Katipunan* encouraged this perspective because it made their lives easier. As the scattered oral accounts say, the Nails of Christ consisted of what would today be described as hunters within

the larger organization of the *Katipunan*. Backed by like-minded sponsors from the Freemason's Society, the Nails had one job: cull supernatural threats to the budding Philippine Revolution. Foreign monsters from Europe — particularly vampires from Spain, and less definable entities believed to be from the British Isles — had arrived on the archipelago together with their human counterparts and were every inch as imperialist as the country's conquerors. Accordingly, a few of them had vested interests in keeping the Philippines under Spain's control.

At present, there's no way to verify whether the Nails of Christ made any impact at all. There are stories, of course, of how this-or-that battle really went, or of how so-and-so revolutionary hero of the Philippines had been aware of the Nails all along and aided them in their cause. There are just as many stories of cells of Nails failing, or of targeting one imperial entity or another on the pretense of them being supernatural only to discover that they were merely dealing with evil mortal men. The *Katipunan* won independence for the Philippines, suffered its own internal betrayals, waged war against American forces, made friends with Americans, then faded into obscurity.

Nevertheless, the Nails of Christ has persisted across the centuries, and its cause has not changed. The organization's operators continue to hide among the seditionists, communists, free thinkers, critics, and revolutionaries of the Philippines. They still view themselves as the lonely soldiers of the watchtower, obsessively researching any foreign supernatural threat that enters their territory, and leaping into battle with their silver blades and their body armor lined with blessed medallions.

Key Personnel

- **Atanasia Mabini**, the *Supremo* (leader), claims to be the reincarnation of Apolinario Mabini, the revolutionary "Brains of the *Katipunan*" from the 1800s
- **Timothy Flores**, second in command to Atanasia, believes that Atanasia is telling the truth and will violently oppose individuals who disagree
- **Maria Posadas,** Chief Secretary, might be the only person in the entirety of the Nails who has an accurate read of how big the organization is, how many squads are out there, and other logistical matters
- **Beatrice Sioson**, sleeper agent of the Nails within the National Communist Party of the Philippines
- **Malik Aguila**, sleeper agent of the Nails within the Moro-Islamic Liberation Front
- **Camille Basa**, self-styled Archivist of the Nails of Christ, goes against the custom of the org by attempting to stitch together a history of the Nails, gathering whatever testimony and artifacts she can of the organization

Operation

As an organization, the Nails are a bit more decentralized than is common. A core group of Nails acts as the faction's leaders, and offers what support they can by bankrolling equipment, passing down leads, and exercising any limited political influence they may possess among their mundane peers. In general, Nails know Atanasia Mabini by name and have heard her voice over burner-phone exchanges and recorded missives, although most Nails will go their entire career without meeting her, much less knowing what she looks like. If a Nail is especially important or competent, they'll end up in a teleconference or a face-to-face meeting with Timothy Flores or Maria Posadas.

The org observes a bloodletting ritual and esoteric ceremony to acknowledge the initiation of a new Nail, patterned after the old traditions of the *Katipunan*. In the same vein, people are recruited into the Nails through personal reference and extensive screening, and a huge premise is placed upon blood relations. Note, however, that as is typical in the Philippines, "blood relation" can also mean close friends who might as well be family and includes a reliance on expansive, extended family networks. This is not to say that whole clans become Nails from the get-go, or are aware that one of their own is a Nail. What's closer to reality is that one Nail will cultivate a successor in secret without telling their protégé the truth until the very last moment, or that a deceased or grievously injured Nail's fellows will look toward their peers' families for candidates before going anywhere else.

Nails learn the same codified language and symbology, yet another artifact of the organization's earliest days with the *Katipunan*. This language is vital, and the org adds new terminology every few years to keep up with the times and to foil spies. Some individual groups even develop their own secret codes within their circles.

Interestingly, at most three squads of Nails will be in contact with each other throughout their tenure, with the leaders of each Nail acting as an authoritative council over their constituents. Layers of secrecy serve as extra security: Because these localized groups are effectively divided into blocs and are assigned to operate in just one specific focus, it's entirely possible for two or more blocs of Nails could be working just a stone's throw away from one another in the city and never realize they were all part of the same organization. *Supremos* have famously rejected suggestions to centralize communications throughout the decades, and Atanasia is no exception. Nails function off the grid, without the modern convenience of online platforms, and mobile-phone usage is extremely limited. Bloc leaders report directly to the *Supremo*, or her second, or to the Chief Secretary. The burden lies on the Nails' supreme leadership to sort out the mess of messages and concerns.

Assessing potential supernatural threats from abroad remains to be the Nails' biggest focus; backing revolutionary groups or entities who are critical of the Philippine government is secondary. A typical Nail soldier has been radicalized in the sense that they'll believe that all ills suffered by their country are foreign and supernatural in nature until proven otherwise. More than a few think that foreign powers continue to influence the Philippine government, and will point fingers at American interests, Japanese pushes for "friendship and solidarity," waves of Korean migration, and the steady flow of Chinese businessmen.

Complications

Clinging to archaic means of communication and refusing to centralize is a double-edged sword for the Nails of Christ. On the one hand, the organization will likely never manage to mobilize at full force, and would thus be ineffective against large threats. On the other hand, this diffusion of power and influence makes Nails highly effective at handling singular issues, and may also ensure the organization's overall survival. A powerful antagonist may succeed in exposing one bloc, but will find themselves hard-pressed to root out any other bloc due to the lack of contact between the Nails' different groups.

Nails tend to pick up recruits from the left-leaning and seditious demographic of the country because that is always how the organization has done things. It is not uncommon for a Nail to participate in legitimate destabilization efforts, or protest movements, or armed rebellion against mundane Filipino powers in between gathering intel for a foreign threat in their location. As such, Nails tend to lead even more dangerous lives than many Hunters do. If a ravening shapeshifter doesn't kill a Nail, it's entirely possible that a police officer or soldier will.

Generally, Nails rely overmuch on their zeal, the justness of their cause, and human ingenuity to carry them through. Knowledge of combating supernatural threats is passed down through haphazard stories, and further perpetuated by common myths built across the centuries of the organization's existence. This org consists of the sorts of hunters who will shoot now and shoot a lot before asking questions and must be carefully directed into methodic intelligence gathering and investigation.

Patriotism and love for one's country easily snowball into xenophobia and an obsession for "purely Filipino" ways, means, and methods among the Nails. There have been more than a few incidents where a bloc targeted a foreign person of interest, and even after all indicators pointed at said individual being clean, the bloc's operatives continued to scrounge about for dirt, refusing to believe that their target could be innocent. The purity culture among Nails is especially damaging. Nails who cannot prove that they're 100 percent Filipino are needled almost endlessly by their peers and expected to work harder than most in order to earn their keep. This is, of course, further aggravated by things like classism, and inherent biases for the concerns of Manila and the centers of power in the country versus the provinces.

On that note: Unknown to the majority, fractures have recently come to the fore among the org's leadership. Malik Aguila, appointed representative of all Nails in operation within the island of Mindinao, has grown frustrated with the generational bias toward Luzon and other Christianized areas of the archipelago. He is secretly planning to break away from the Nails and form his own organization, one that's more amenable to Islamic hunters and more in line with their location's unique concerns.

Most Nails, including those closest to Atanasia, also don't know that their *Supremo* is obsessed with researching ghosts and the afterlife, and finding ways to draw on their power. She believes she is the reincarnation of Apolinario Mabini because she frequently experiences flashes of his memories in her dreams. Whether this is an actual past-life situation, an otherworldly power manipulating her, or simply delusion has yet to reveal itself.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

CAST THE LAST DIE

A bloc of Nails has discovered that the Chinese businessman behind the illegal gambling operations in their district is backed by vampires. The bloodsuckers are bankrolling the whole thing, on the pretense that they can nab workers that the businessman brings in whenever they need to feed. Of course, the gambling ops line the pockets of these monsters further, making it easier for them to entrench themselves in the city. Hunters with connections to corporate spheres of influence might have an "opportunity" to assist the Nails in shutting everything down, whether elective or coerced.

BRING THEM HOME BEFORE DARK

The media is all over the vicious slaughter of an entire platoon of Special Action Forces soldiers in Mindinao. What nobody's saying, however, is that the soldier's corpses were half eaten, and several of them were drained of blood. Hunters with military contacts may catch wind of this through spooked colleagues and hear about how this matches the story of another ravaged platoon from some years back. The Nails of Christ are convinced that a family of *aswang* — viscera-eating monsters who wear human skin by the day and have powers akin to those of vampires — is back on the prowl and hungry for blood.

HUSH: DON'T SAY A WORD

Debased American men often visit the Philippines to indulge in their vile sex tourism, but not all of them are warlocks looking for power. Hunters who have some associations with the Nails of Christ may pick up on a lead about a sex offender who has been siphoning life energy from the prostitutes and children he asks for, stealing vitality from the young and vulnerable. Alternatively, Hunters with police, law, or military backgrounds will hear of the case from peers, together with the creepy reports of how the remains of the victims were discovered as lifeless husks in hotels, and discover the Nails pursuing the same lead.

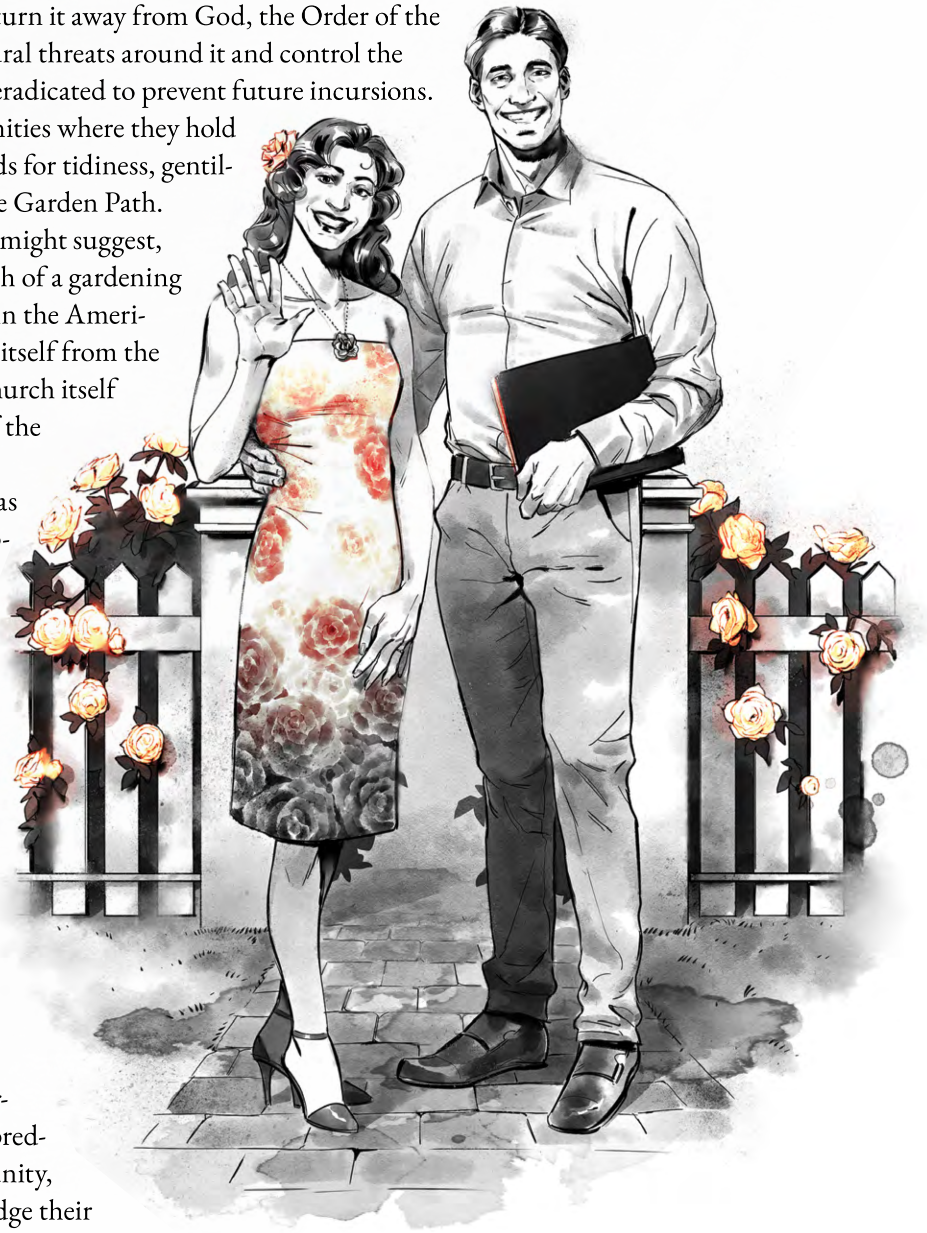
The Order of the Rose

Religious Org

The Order of the Rose believes that cleanliness, of both the spiritual and physical variety, is indeed next to godliness. Blossoms, as the members of the Order of the Rose refer to themselves, see supernatural attacks and predators as a reflection of the communities in which they occur. If a werewolf or vampire has chosen to turn a place into its hunting ground, Blossoms believe that the community itself is unclean on some level and being punished for its sins, a modern version of the fate of Sodom or Gomorrah. Viewing the supernatural as an inherently contaminating element that seeks to corrupt the world and turn it away from God, the Order of the Rose works both to stamp out the supernatural threats around it and control the places where the immediate threat has been eradicated to prevent future incursions. Accordingly, Blossoms pressure the communities where they hold sway to adhere to Order of the Rose standards for tidiness, gentility, and uniformity, known collectively as the Garden Path.

As its reliance on gardening terminology might suggest, the Order of the Rose began as the outgrowth of a gardening club, itself affiliated with a Catholic diocese in the American Midwest. The Order has since separated itself from the Catholic faith, though, believing that the Church itself is not yet clean enough to repel incursions of the supernatural. The revelation that one of the junior priests in the Order's initial diocese was a vampire hiding in plain sight helped to popularize this attitude and gave the Order of the Rose the strength and will to ritualize its own faith practices and traditions. The relative wealth of many of its members aided these efforts, and tithing is one of the few traditions that the Order of the Rose has kept from its Catholic origins, though it calls this practice cultivation.

Bringing in an unaffiliated community to follow The Order of the Garden Path is a process that often takes a few years to take hold but which may extend into neighboring communities. The Order keeps its ear to the ground in areas it wants to control, watching for communities that bear the characteristics of the presence of a supernatural predator. A few Blossoms then "sow" the community, not to preach their beliefs, or even acknowledge their



relationship to the Order, but instead to make places for themselves within the community and prepare it for the Order's official arrival. Their main role is to call attention to the signs of predation, making residents feel unsafe and unable to take care of the threats around it without outside help. A common sign of a community being prospected by the Order of the Rose in this way is the development of various community safety groups whose names reference cleanliness through words like purify, scour, purge, or cleanse.

Once the Order's "home-grown" groups are well-established within a community under consideration, the Order of the Rose comes to town, led by a senior local leader known as the Bloom, and the evangelism effort begins. The Order believes in action as the supreme form of worship. It eschews large religious buildings and formal services as both an unnecessary cost and a way of keeping the experience of godliness away from the daily lives of its followers. Instead, it holds "sow the seed" life-improvement classes at community members' homes to share its credos, and distributes community bulletins (both printed and digital) as a way of sharing its message, praising community members whose adhere to the lessons shared in the Order's classes, and letting the community know of threats it has eliminated.

The Order of the Rose's belief in the supernatural as a contaminating agent within a godly life leads them to keep the hunters who eliminate these threats somewhat at arm's length from the rest of the organization. Known as the Thorns, the Order's hunters are efficient and effective, preferring a no-spectacle surgical strike. Once deployed in an area, they leave no stone unturned in their pursuit of all supernatural quarry. To speed their work along, the Bloom and Blossoms encourage community members to report on anything or anyone that appears out of the ordinary and shares this intelligence with the Thorns. Once the Thorns' work is done and the community feels safe, the Blossoms encourage members to follow the Order of the Rose's teachings and the community is brought into the fold. Known collectively as gardeners, community members are not considered full members of the Order, but they fall under the protection of the Order and are asked to abide by the Garden Path.

When enough members of a community are gardeners, the Order considers that location to be under its control and the Garden Path begins to be enforced throughout the entire community. This list of rules for living is treated as a religious text and has regulations and recommendations for almost all aspects of public life, from the length of the grass on a person's front lawn to acceptable clothing styles to the proper way to greet an acquaintance on the street. The list is updated annually by a national meeting of the Blooms during their annual Garland festival, with final arbitration on any one rule provided by the Conservator, who serves as the highest religious authority within the Order.

Key Personnel

- **Amelia Carson**, Conservator
- **Lilianne Betts**, Deputy Conservator and organizer of the Harvest celebration
- **Molly Leigh Tiber**, Thorn Team Leader

Operation

The Order of the Rose is, at least on its surface, focused on community power. As such, it keeps no central office. Even within an individual community, organization occurs at the home of the Bloom who oversees the area. One of the Bloom's primary jobs — in addition to dealing with any supernatural threat that might lessen the community's feeling of safety, and, in turn, the hold that the Order has on that community — is to be a model of the Garden Path. Bloom houses are usually beautifully and *precisely* decorated, calling to mind a picture from a home-and-garden magazine, and have extensive and beautifully landscaped grounds. In urban areas where space is at a premium, Blooms may create beautiful roof gardens or adopt and cultivate common spaces, such as courtyards. Meetings of Blooms from different regions rotate between these houses, giving the Blooms the opportunity to ensure that one another's homes conform to pristine, godly standards.

The two exceptions to the home-based nature of the Order of the Rose's teachings are its two biannual celebrations: the Garland festival, which brings together full members of the Order for a combination of planning, celebration, and rededication to the Order's beliefs; and Harvest, where gardeners from across Order of the Rose communities gather for fellowship and fun. The atmosphere of Harvest, in particular, is one of an especially vivacious garden party. While Garden Path rules are strictly enforced, it has become a place for individual communities to show off, sharing pictures of beautification projects, debuting new clothing styles that adhere to Path values, and trading techniques they have used to keep their communities orderly and safe. Blossoms work tirelessly throughout Harvest to keep gardeners happy, sharing new "sowing the seeds" lessons, celebrating the wins of the previous year, and creating a feeling of belonging that demonstrates to gardeners the value of the Order's work. Potential new, full members of the Order are also recruited at Harvest and assigned smaller tasks to see if they can handle them with grace and obedience. Those who do well may be invited to the Garland Festival, cementing their advancement from mere gardener to full member of the Order.

The progression of responsibility within the Order of the Rose is Bud (a potential recruit) to Blossom to Bloom, but within each level are several specializations, each denoted by a different color. Yellows do the initial infiltration into a community and continue to navigate community politics after the Order is established, Reds offer "sow the seed" lessons and focus on public speaking, Oranges work behind the scenes on logistics and planning, Pinks help to scout for new communities, and Blues look for threats to existing Order strongholds, whether from the supernatural, another organization, or a community member at odds with the Garden Path. Buds may share their preference among these options by volunteering for tasks with Blossoms of their preferred color, but it's up to the Blossoms who decide who joins their ranks.

Once chosen, most Order members remain Blossoms for their entire lives, but each new community is overseen by a newly promoted Bloom who stays with that community for several years at a minimum, making recruitment of new neighborhoods and regions the best way for Blossoms to move up in the organization. For broader oversight and leadership, Blooms annually select a Conservator and Deputy Conservator from within their ranks (who must come from different color specialties) to provide religious leadership and strategic guidance. Conservators and their Deputies can serve indefinitely, but they must be re-elected by the Blooms every year.

Thorns are the one exception to these rules and progressions. As the closest thing that the Order has to "forces," they don't participate in the overall decision-making process of the Order and cannot serve as a Conservator or Deputy. Instead, their team leader works with the blue Blooms to identify threats that the Thorns can then eliminate. As with Blossoms, potential Thorns are chosen at Harvest each year, with the group keeping an eye out for those who might have an aptitude for hunting. The Order always has a need for enough Thorns to cover any potential threat to the Order, so the group occasionally also recruits outside hunters as support — a practice the Conservator usually chooses to ignore.

Complications

This may all sound like an overbearing church community, homeowners association, multilevel marketing scheme, and even a bit of *The Stepford Wives*, with monster-hunting on the periphery. Yep. In this particular case, the monster-hunting is absolutely secondary, and the org strongly seeks social control as both end and means.

On the surface, neighborhoods that follow the Garden Path seem pleasant enough, and are often quite beautiful — the cultivation of local flowers and planting of trees is an important part of the Garden Path, and communities that have followed it for some time are often awash with beautiful greenery. Hidden beneath the surface, though, is the rapid, socially authoritarian crushing of behaviors and people who choose to remain "off the path," a term used for a wide variety of unapproved conduct. While the Order condemns all "off the path" behavior equally, it can range widely, from failure to keep up a front lawn to not returning borrowed tools, to whatever moral, sexual, parental, or even supernatural "deviancies" the Bloom chooses to declaim.

The Order remains publicly silent about its methods for correcting those who stray from the path, but they generally escalate over time, beginning with gentle warnings and the application of peer pressure, evolving into the development of legal strictures and decrees that criminalize the behavior in question (often aided by the Order's policy of quickly filling seats in local government with Blossoms or trusted gardeners), and eventually becoming punitive. Members of the community who still refuse to walk the path are referred to within the order as "weeds" and aggressively removed from the community much as a supernatural threat might be. Thorns make it clear that to stay in the community could be life threatening for the "weed" in question. While this behavior might seem outlandish to an outsider, by the time the Order takes this kind of step, it's well-embedded and supported by the gardeners, who usually welcome this action as a way of keeping the overall community safe and pleasant.

The Thorns often resent their role doing the dirty work of the Order; while they have wide latitude in terms of how they eliminate threats, they have no choice over which things or people bear the status of threat in the first place. The broader Order also considers Thorns to be a necessary but unfortunate evil, earning Thorns suspicion from Blossoms and Blooms. Due to their use of outside recruits, they are also the group within the Order with the widest variety of beliefs in its underlying religious philosophy. Some are diehards who wish the Order would do more to crush even the first hint of dissent within its communities, while others enjoy the hunt much more than the reasoning for it. A few have even expressed sympathy for some of their supernatural prey, feeling a kinship of sorts to those who pose no immediate threat as fellow outsiders, preferring to relocate them rather than kill them. Needless to say, this is often misplaced sympathy.

Thorns also hold one of the Order's largest secrets — the supernatural violence that ravages communities before the Order arrives is often no accident. While Thorns remove any supernatural dangers from the immediate vicinity of a potential Order of the Rose community, they are sometimes asked to redirect the threat toward an unaffiliated community and have been instructed to ignore any and all supernatural creatures that don't pose a threat to their immediate community. This increases the chances that communities surrounding one controlled by the Order will be willing to follow the Garden Path to keep themselves as safe as their neighbors.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

STANDING THEIR GROUND

Living next to an Order of the Rose community can be hell. The mayor of a small city next to an Order-controlled suburb has no desire to become another cookie-cutter Order community, but also has no other way to deal with a supernatural creature who was diverted from that suburb to the city and is now the bane of its most vulnerable neighborhoods. They've been given a week by the City Council to get rid of the threat or the Order is coming in. They ask the Hunters to get rid of the threat and see what they can do to prevent any future supernatural creatures from destroying the city.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

A Bloom within a local Order of the Rose community went missing overnight. They claimed to be off on an inspirational walk but have behaved oddly since their return, and the Conservator suspects the involvement of something supernatural during their absence. Not wanting to get the Thorns involved, the Conservator asks the Hunters to find out what might have happened and to take care of the situation immediately. Obviously, this calls the Hunters' values into question: Is pursuing the (possible) supernatural worth maintaining the Order's rigid social dominance of their community?

ROTTEN HARVEST

A "weed" who was thrown out of one of the Order of the Rose's communities has devised the perfect plan to get back at the Order: They'll share the location of Harvest with a vampire who both shares their grudge against the Order as well seeks a gathering of potential victims. (Hey, no one said the weed was unjustly accused....) Their attempts to find out where Harvest will be held this year threw up enough red flags that the Order is suspicious yet unclear what to look out for. With all hands on deck for this year's celebration, they need the Hunters' help to find out what the potential threat is and help stop it without throwing off the overall festivities.

Orpheus Group

Corporate Org

As the gold standard for Corporate organizations, the Orpheus Group has accomplished a great deal in its time. Specifically, many of its experiments have paid off, not the least of which in the form of a genuine ability to allow operators in its employ to project themselves spiritually into a layer of reality that exists apart from the physical world. The company and its research is too young, however, to understand the complexities of this spirit world, and so even now, decades into its discovery, it still remains a place — if "place" is the correct word — of mystery and discovery.

As part of that ability to travel spiritually, this "Project Orpheus" also permits the ability to perceive and communicate and on occasion interact with ghosts, spirits, or some type of incorporeal, metaphysical entities. Ghosts seem to be the most probable explanation, as the entities themselves have personalities and memories corresponding to living individuals who match records that can be corroborated after Orpheus agents interact with them.

Needless to say, this is huge, as the Orpheus Group's accomplishments not only provide access to an entirely alternate plane of existence, but also congress with the entities dwelling in that space and sometimes bleeding over into physical manifestation. Further, that interaction with the spirits isn't purely antagonistic, unlike so many other interactions between orgs and supernatural entities.

The result is a company that acts with some combination of commercial and academic interests. Part private-investigation agency, part spiritual expedition, Orpheus Group sells its services to (mostly wealthy) clients, offering a variety of boutique services from spirit-world spying to sending malignant

spirits to their final rest, depending on the circumstances.

For the most part, the operation is legit, and Orpheus Group won't hold confidential information collected on spying jaunts against paying clients, because such a niche operation relies on reputation and integrity to build trust with future clients. It's probably just a matter of time, though, before something suitably intriguing emerges that tempts the company's level of remove. And that time will come — Orpheus Group isn't in the long-term business of contract voyeurism, it's in the business of researching and discovering how much more profitably they can mine access to this metaphysical space. It's not long before one's phone or smart speaker being the only thing listening to them everywhere they go may be a quaint notion.

To this end, Orpheus Group will on occasion even perform "exorcisms" pro bono. Of course, many of these purported hauntings end up being hoaxes or other inauthentic events, but negative cases help build the body of information by which actual ghostly manifestations can be screened. And, again, it's not a sense of altruism driving the company in these cases. Each operation is a chance to learn, to build the database and refine the algorithm, to understand what makes spirits tick and therefore how they might be harnessed toward... something profitable. It's an opportunity space, and the ghosts Orpheus Group deals with will certainly become tools at some point if the company is successful in both its research on them and its innovations in how to turn them toward the corporate will.

Key Personnel

- **Jack Tilton**, CEO
- **Anne Del Greco**, board member and occult dilettante
- **Jane Kennedy**, board member and "mother of all sleepers" who originally discovered the spiritual-projection capabilities of Orpheus technology
- **Kate Dennison**, project manager and projecting agent (see below)
- **Agent Unknown**, former employee turned FBI/IAO informant

Operation

The Orpheus Group operates out of a nondescript two-story building in a New York state industrial park, which has numerous basements and sub-levels where projection equipment, computer systems, training facilities, and research-and-development laboratories are housed.

Smaller field offices open and close quickly in other locales in response to high-paying clients or opportunities that present a strong business case. These pop-up offices are generally hosted in short-term-lease facilities or even temporary structures built in the field, to be shut down as soon as the contract is complete.

The entire company is perhaps 40 employees, most of whom are support staff who aid projecting agents, who must encase themselves in elaborate and cumbersome "pods" in order to project themselves into the ghostly interstice between the worlds of the living and the dead.

The entirety of Orpheus Group's focus is on ghosts and the spirit world containing them, and while the existence of other supernatural entities might be noteworthy to Orpheus techs or execs, "it's not in the remit." The org has too much specifically invested in its extensive (and expensive) array of ghost-hunting equipment to hare off on even credible reports of other supernatural creatures. Which isn't to say that Orpheus agents might not observe the ghostly remains of a vampiric feeding or werewolf slaughter and track them back to the source. Agents are decidedly unprepared to deal with such monstrosities, however, and would be wise to retreat the moment they realize how out of their depth they are if they do chance across these creatures, surely.

Complications

Quite plainly, the Orpheus Group and its projecting agents are trying to run before they can walk. Quick to exploit the advantages of the spiritual reality, the Orpheus Group has only the smallest fraction of understanding of what it has uncovered. This puts every foray into the spirit-world it has discovered at risk of disturbing metaphysical balances, inadvertently causing bleedover into the physical world, and antagonizing the inhabitants of that spirit-world. At best, projecting Orpheus agents are interlopers into a reality not made for their presence; at worst, they may well touch off a spiritual catastrophe the extent of which they lack the ability to predict or understand.

Operators within the Orpheus Group, especially those agents who make the journey into the spirit world, exhibit attitudes across a huge spectrum, from gung-ho opportunism to moral caution or even existential fear. So focused is the corporation on being able to use this spirit-world it has discovered, it has devoted little effort to understanding the extent or nature of that spirit-world. To wit, what are the as-yet unforeseen costs or side-effects of spiritual projection or interaction with these ghosts?

And further, the Orpheus group has already shown a willingness to absolve itself of certain obvious moral failures, such as respecting privacy or even the sanctity of life. In no short order after developing its technologies, the Orpheus Group began undertaking spying, information-gathering, and even assassination contracts. Such being the case, there are those who know about or were even formerly affiliated with the Orpheus Group who consider it to have crossed the line and itself become the sort of predatory supernatural horror that Hunters oppose on principle.

Within the Orpheus Group exists a skunkworks side project that exists to grant aid to spirits who appear to projecting Orpheus agents to be in some sort of straits. The initiative, known as Lazarus Redux, is led by Kate Dennison, who works both as a project manager and an agent who can herself project. Much of Dennison's efforts are spent in hiding the compassionate nature of Lazarus Redux's possibilities, which she obfuscates behind the outcomes of that work. In particular, certain spirits that Orpheus Group considers innately hostile have been redeemed or otherwise changed under Lazarus Redux protocols. While the redemptive objective of Lazarus Redux isn't part of the current Orpheus mission of information-gathering and exploration, the ability to seemingly change the metaphysical nature of certain spirit entities "might be exploitable," and so long as Dennison is able to demonstrate key performance indicators, Lazarus Redux can continue. For exactly how long, however, is unknown.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

WRONG WAY

Improperly calibrated equipment has forced an unintended manifestation on an Orpheus contract. All the gear the field team has is useful for projecting into the spirit-world, not in dealing with spirits who have been pulled across the boundary into the physical world. Desperately, the Orpheus operatives reach out to the players' Hunters to help deal with the anguished spirit they unintentionally set loose on the world. But when dealing with the renegade ghost, the Hunters become suspicious that the accident wasn't actually an accident.

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

An Orpheus Group operation realizes that it's in over its head, having discovered ghostly residue attributed to some other supernatural threat. It hires the players' characters either as protection from the unknown supernatural creatures, or to proactively hunt them down in the event that Orpheus discovers something really valuable and doesn't want to share it — or to have the creature that caused the situation trace it back to them.

OPERATION COMPROMISED

The Information Awareness Office (see p. 232) and the American FBI had been performing an investigation into Project Orpheus after a quantity of contaminated drugs was traced back to the Orpheus Group after resulting in the deaths of over 300 users. While the public's attention to the event seems to have changed focus, Orpheus Group believes it is still under investigation. Hunters with Governmental contacts or backgrounds might be brought in as consultants to help with a counter-investigation, especially if there's anything the Orpheus Group wants especially protected.

Re:Venge

Corporate Org

Re:Venge may be a relative newcomer to the world of Unusual Threat Response, but this small start-up has big ambitions! No longer does dealing with manifestations need to rely on cumbersome government bureaus or judgmental faith-based initiatives; Re:Venge is disrupting the monster-problem space by harnessing the power in everyone's pockets!

Started by two college friends who witnessed their drinking buddy screaming and being hauled away by a werewolf, RV (as it is commonly known) offers vengeance-on-demand for the loved ones of people suffering as a result of the supernatural. The company monitors news reports and social media posts to find patterns of violence that could be the work of supernatural creatures — unusual marks on a series of bodies, attacks that correspond to the phases of the moon, streaks of unexplained kidnappings. Once a supernatural threat has been located and confirmed, RV outsources the killing itself, sharing information on the threat with local Hunters looking to strike a blow against the occult in their area.

But while one can find vengeance everywhere from RV's name to its mission statement, data collection is the company's real business model.

RV doesn't ask for payment for its work (though it does accept donations, and has been known to prioritize the cases of high-net-worth individuals in the hope of lucrative gratitude), but requires clients to sign a lifetime contract to use its data-mining software, Re:View. Grieving family members often don't read the fine print, which allows RV full access to their technological lives, from their browsing history and photos to the GPS on their phones.

The RV sales team's "closure counselors" pitch the contract as a way to help keep other families safe, and the team often heavily implies that having it around earlier could have prevented the death of a client's loved one. In truth, though, RV uses the data only for its own ends — finding more clients, expanding its web of information, and maximizing profit by selling the data to the highest bidder. As long as a buyer can afford it, RV isn't picky about who their collected data goes to, though internal policy dictates that the purchaser be an organization of some type, mostly to free RV from any liability once the data is used.

A typical RV engagement has a few key steps. Once data analytics identifies a victim and their loved ones, closure counselors reach out to denounce the lack of any progress on solving the murder by the local police (who are usually out of their depth when a supernatural act of violence occurs) and offer a simple solution: an eye for an eye. Once the grief-stricken client has signed on the bottom line and installed RV's software, a bulletin travels to any and all "freelance" hunters in the area via dark web solicitations or even direct B2B pushes, as RV also supports a contractor version of its app. The first to claim the Hunt activates a timer defining a specific length of time to kill the creature, determined by a proprietary algorithm that estimates how long a hunt should take based on the actions of the creature thus far and how difficult it would be to kill. Once the job is complete, the freelance hunter provides proof, both supernatural and mundane, to RV, which has its closure counselors share the final outcome of the job with the client and leaves them with its data tracking software running on all of their devices.

Naturally, these "freelance" hunters may include everyone from dedicated cells of actual Hunters to gangs of riled-up Vigilantes to, well, basically bat-swinging maniacs.

RV claims to provide a necessary service — ridding the world of violent predators and giving a sense of purpose to vigilante hunters who have either taken care of all threats in their immediate area or need intel on potential new threats. In truth, though, RV is behind much of the demand for its work. Since heightened emotions inspire people to agree to accept the RV contract, the company often launches strategic digital advertising campaigns in areas where they suspect supernatural attacks may be occurring. These campaigns do not reveal the existence of the supernatural, but they do promote the idea of personal vengeance as the best solution to violence—an idea that is key to RV maintaining its bottom line.

Key Personnel

- **Daniel "Danny" Brozer,** co-founder and CEO
- **Tim Dalitson**, co-founder and COO
- **May Sperrett**, former hunter and chief recruiter
- **Penny**, head of compliance and leader of the satisfiers
- **Darius Grim**, freelance hunter and organizer, who may well awaken a Drive

Operations

RV's headquarters are sleek, but reflect the company's roots. Red is a predominant accent color, with veins of crimson resin (representing both blood and data) running through the minimalist white walls. A large picture of Nick, the acquaintance whose death gave co-founders Danny and Tim the idea to start RV, hangs behind the reception area — at the touch of a button, it shifts to reveal a mosaic of pictures of dead supernatural creatures sent in by the company's freelance hunters.

Despite all the bells and whistles, the overwhelming feeling in RV's offices is emptiness. While the offices take up a full floor of a large office complex (a childhood dream of Danny's), only a handful of full-time staff work on-site, primarily in marketing. RV instead depends on for-hire remote work for much of its core operations, with its "closure counselor" sales force, tech developers, and data analysts often locked into long-term contracts loaded with non-compete clauses that essentially prevent them from looking for work elsewhere in the very broadly defined tech sector.

In many ways, RV's hunters are similarly trapped. RV touts the connections it helps individual freelance hunters to build through Re:Verb, a service that lets hunters share strategies, ask questions, and form relationships (while tracking their data, naturally), but there's a catch: Hunters who use the service frequently tend to get more work, while those who avoid it soon find that RV is happy to use all the data at its disposal to predict and disrupt their non-RV hunts. Doing this dirty work is RV's mysterious compliance department, which sends customer service reps called satisfiers to visit anyone attempting to break their contract and has a 100 percent compliance rate. Penny, who runs the department, is widely considered to be the most powerful person at the company.

Complications

Hunting isn't really the point of RV's business, and it shows in how they do their work. As the company continues to set aggressive goals for growth, many of its freelance contractors have taken to cutting corners. Recruiters sign hunters up for the service without checking to make sure they have anything resembling proper training, data analysts take loose connections between unrelated attacks and attribute them to the supernatural, and closure counselors overpromise the scale of vengeance the service is able to provide. RV's reputation for getting the job done (albeit one promoted heavily by its marketing department) could be damaged if word gets out about jobs in which one hunter has had to follow up on a contract when the prey escaped or the few times when RV's target turned out not to be a supernatural threat after all.

As RVs work gets sloppier, two internal forces are trying to right the ship: Darius Grim, an elite-level hunter who has become a leader within the RV hunter community thanks to his prolific posting on Re:Verb, and Penny, whose satisfiers, theoretically only tasked with making sure RV clients stick to their contracts long-term (including the clause that mandates they not badmouth the company in any way), also serve as the clean-up crew for the numerous RV hunts that go wrong. Because let's be honest: Many woefully unprepared hunters simply can't adequately perform any hunt.

Unfortunately for RV, Darius and Penny are increasingly at odds with one another. Darius has been consistently concerned about the way hunters are treated and is trying to organize them into a union of sorts. While this sub-organization is still in the very nascent stages, it poses a threat to RV's model, as the organization's control over its hunters is what allows it to fulfill requests for clients and ensure that supernatural problems aren't handled off-books. Penny has made it her job to stymie the work of Darius and the would-be "free hunters," sending her satisfiers to shadow their work and prevent them from hunting away from RV's service. Not only has this led to some dangerous situations as the hunters and satisfiers get in each other's way, but her commitment of resources to this problem has lessened the number of satisfiers working to keep clients happy. As a result, an increased amount of grumbling online now threatens the data tracking that RV forces on its clients. No one has spoken out publicly yet, but it seems to be only a matter of time.

Finally, RV has had some trouble managing its relationship with its data buyers. While larger Government and Corporate orgs once saw RV as a good way to quickly get information about potential targets, its rapid growth has caused some to worry about the potential costs once RV's information is too important to ignore, and some have unofficially blackballed RV in order to slow down its cash flow and keep its growth under control. In response, RV has been developing a subscription service that would provide data directly to the public, without controls over what they do with it, which is, depending on whom you ask, either a remarkable way to make the world a more open place or a dangerous tool that supernatural predators themselves could use to wreak havoc and commit acts of violence against humans.

In Stories: Interactions with Hunters

GRUDGE FROM THE GRAVE

When someone in RV's marketing department summons the ghost of Nick, whose death led to the founding of the company, for an interview in a company retrospective, they find an angry and restless spirit. Nick's death was in fact due largely to the carelessness and cowardice of his drinking buddies Tim and Danny, who proved the veracity of the old adage, "You don't need to outrun the predator, you just need to outrun your friends." Seeing the two profit from his demise is unacceptable. Nick's spirit has entreated other supernatural creatures to beset the two co-founders, including the never-apprehended werewolf who killed him. (Not that many of these creatures need any further motivation beyond foiling hunters.) Intending to prevent anyone within the company from knowing the truth of RV's origins, the two reach out to the Hunters to put an end to Nick and the creatures he has now allied himself with.

SLOPPY HUNTING

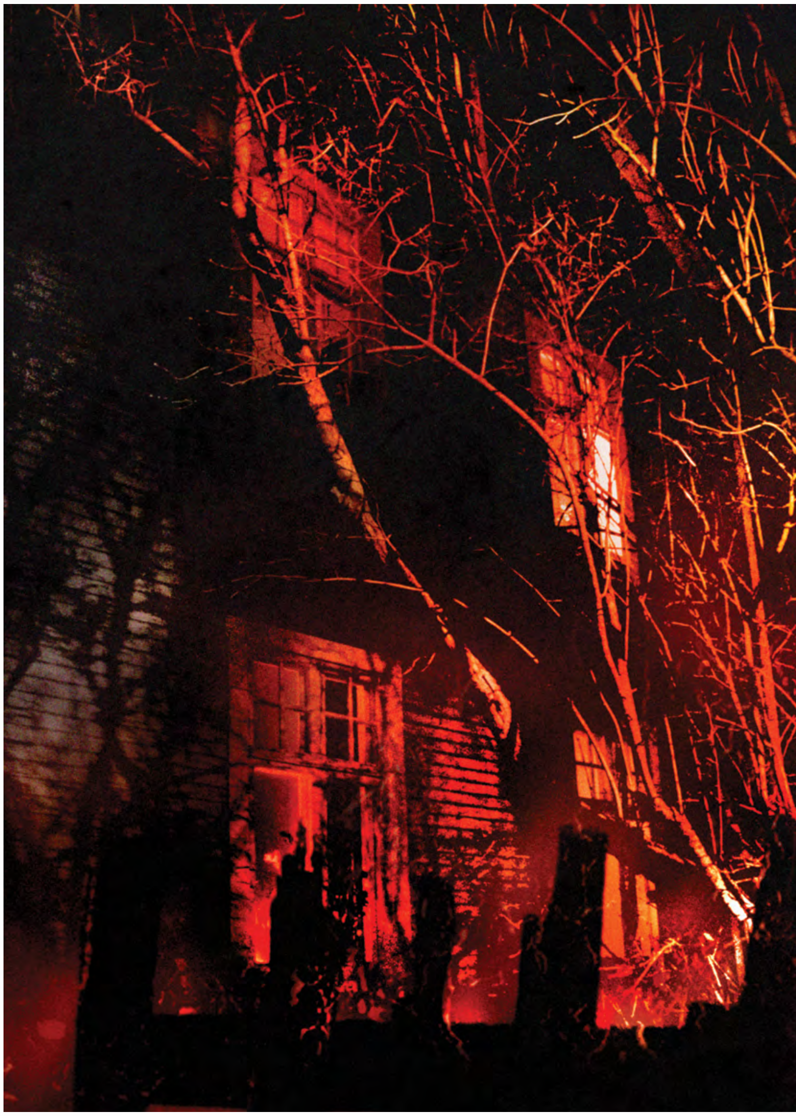
A young hunter, offered an RV contract far beyond their skill level due to a clerical error, has attempted a direct assault on a supernatural creature without doing any research or having much of a plan. After barely escaping with their life, they offer the Hunters pay in order to take care of the threat for them, but the Hunters must make it seem as if this newbie is actually the one doing the work for the benefit of any satisfiers who are watching. The young hunter is impulsive and rash, making the Hunters' job that much harder, but they can be turned into an asset with the right training and tools.

DATA BREACH

Humans seeking proof that the supernatural is real have read between the lines of RVs marketing materials and attempted to access data to prove their theories. While their breach has been limited to data about a specific region that RV operates in, they have now posted it all on a forum for fellow conspiracy theorists, leading to two separate but intertwined threats — some of RV's Government organization buyers are willing to do anything to shut the site down, while a grassroots group of would-be hunters, hyped up by an RV marketing campaign about striking back against violence, encourages the public to take on various supernatural threats and seek their own vengeance. Unable to take on both, Penny reaches out to the Hunters to proactively neutralize the posted threats, undermining the group's credibility and proving to both the Government agencies and their followers that their information is false.

NEGATIVE REVIEW

A dissatisfied customer of RV has broken their contract by posting a series of negative online commentary and videos about the company, all hosted on a website dedicated to slamming RV. In truth, RV did its job, with elite RV hunter Darius Grim successfully killing the prey, but the customer didn't get the sense of satisfaction from this act of revenge that they expected and now wants out of the Re:View service. Penny's satisfiers plan to take care of the issue by luring the customer to a settlement meeting that they know is a killing ground for a supernatural creature, allowing them to keep their 100 percent compliance rate. Darius reaches out to the Hunters and asks for their help to protect the unsatisfied customer from this bloodbath.



Hunter Org Antagonists

Below are some examples of the enemies and rivals Hunters are likely to face from different Organizations.

These antagonists each represent a stereotype. Storytellers are encouraged to "reskin" these examples, particularly during prolonged conflicts with specific orgs or more nuanced interactions. The Special Affairs Division aren't all tech-festooned SWAT brutes, after all, and a battery of lawyers might turn out to be a far greater threat to the cell's operations, so feel free to reposition the Asset Acquisition Executive's traits as a bureaucratic operative for the SAD, or whatever's necessary for the chronicle. Likewise, maybe that Asset Acquisition Executive is actually some rich Arcanum bigshot's expensive lawyer — whatever you need!

SAD UTR Specialist Officer

The Special Affairs Division Unusual Threat Response Specialist Officer (SADUTRSO for short) is likely to view the Hunters' cell in one of two categories: "bait" or "compromised." The odds of survival are roughly equal, but as "bait" the cell is at least free to go down fighting the good fight. With a special forces background, years of experience, and bristling with high-end equipment and monster-hunting weapons, the SADUTRSO knows their value, and the lack of value of anyone who gets in their way.

General Difficulty: 4/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 4, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms 8, Brawl 8, Technology (Demolitions) 8

Edges: Arsenal (Requisitions from SAD) with all Perks

Notes: The SADUTRSO dealt with human targets long before they graduated to taking down supernatural ones. They are experts in most fields of combat and equipped with any and all devices needed to gain the upper hand in the present environment, including thermal imaging sights, recon drones, and breaching charges carried or available at a moment's notice. They use +4 Damage fully automatic rifles and wear tactical SWAT armor (armor value 6) by default, and operate in groups of similar operatives whose numbers are equal to the Danger level.

IAO Commando

The final stage of an IAO raid often involves breach-and-clear tactics specifically suited to exterminating blankbodies. As such, the Commando specializes in getting up close without being noticed, entering the suspected lair, and putting an end to the threat before the threat knows they've been compromised. Professional rivalries put the Commando in a competency category similar to the SADUTRSO, but with an even more specialized function.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 3, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 8, Firearms 8, Melee (Urban CQB) 8, Stealth 8

Edges: Arsenal (Requisitions from IAO) with all Perks

Notes: The IAO Commando has trained to remove vampires' heads from their necks in close combat. If the Commando is able to strike against a sleeping or otherwise inert, unaware vampire, that vampire is beheaded. The Commando is wise enough to operate exclusively during daylight hours, and uses masks and an ever-changing set of codenames to keep their identity secret when on the hunt. Any attempt to ascertain the Commando's identity via Backgrounds (such as

Contacts or Allies) or Edges (such as Global Access) has its Difficulty increased by +2.

Monster-X Asset Acquisition Executive

Monster-X wants to own the hunter business and the Assets Acquisition Executive is the spearhead of that endeavor. They'll buy anything and anyone willing to sell and mercilessly hound those who don't with a diverse arsenal of hostile takeovers, legal injunctions, and plain bribes. The confines of the law are no obstacle — enough money makes sure those confines accommodate the Asset Acquisition Executive.

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 6, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Finance 9, Politics 8, Subterfuge 9

Edges: None

Notes: While they rarely show themselves in person, their influence is very tangible. A cell under financial attack by an Asset Acquisition Executive has all of their Backgrounds reduced by the present Danger level, as their resources are burdened by legal fees, their reputation smeared, and their contacts suddenly reluctant to aid them.

Arcanum Procurer

A self-styled adventurer, as dashing as they are devious, the Procurer is responsible for much of the local Arcanum chapterhouse's field work. Tasked with liberating artifacts, documents, and relics, they're the quintessential graverobber-professor. They're as likely to steal items in possession of the Hunters' cell as to string them along in a heist, only to abscond with the loot, leaving the Hunters to face the ire of the owner.

General Difficulty: 3/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee (Lasso) 8, Larceny 8, Academics (Anthropology) 8

Edges: Library (Arcanum archives) with all Perks

Notes: When the Procurer isn't competing for the same relic, they're actively enlisting the Cell to help them extract it from the possession of some nefarious supernatural creature. They're not above collaborating with the Hunters, but as soon as their prize is within their reach they'll make off with it (and possibly other Artifacts of the Hunters'), leaving them at the mercy of a sentry-creature with a general Difficulty equal to the Danger level.

Project Orpheus Projectionist

Part bio-hacker, part contractor, the Projectionist has a set of skills and life experiences that make them uniquely adept at exactly what they do, with very little applicability elsewhere in the world. It makes for a weird sort of professional captivity: They're great at what they do for whom they do it, but who knows what they'd do if they ever lost the job? Fortunately, they're genuinely interested in helping the people who come to Orpheus Group looking for its distinct problem-solving, and there's a little voyeuristic thrill to it all. However it's more and more demanding and exhausting the longer and more distant the Projectionist pushes themselves into the shadow between the world of... the living and the dead? It's impossible to say what the spirit-place is, really.

General Difficulty: 5/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 4, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 9, Investigation 7, Occult 7

Edges: Sense the Unnatural (Orpheus Project Pod) with all Perks (specialization in Ghosts) except Hands-free

Notes: While using an Orpheus pod, the Projectionist is able to separate their consciousness from their body and roam what they describe as a spirit-world, which amounts to a spiritual "shadow" of the physical world. There they may interact with any ghosts present and even manipulate simple physical affordances in an approximation of poltergeist activity, such as opening a file cabinet drawer or a door to a room, and peruse the contents within. They cannot, however, perform minute or complex tasks from the spirit-world, such as typing on a keyboard or aiming and firing a pistol. They can't take anything physical with them via the spirit-world, but they'll know exactly where, say, incriminating evidence was located when last they checked.... And, of course, their physical body is inert and vulnerable while they're using the pod.

ESOG Radical

Still considering themselves part of the Gladius Dei, the Entity Special Operations Group has officially cut them loose — which is just another way of saying that they've extended their leash. The Radical prefers it that way. They're on a one-person crusade to rid the world of the influence of Evil: all things supernatural not stemming from the grace of God. While they're not blindly pursuing each and every self-proclaimed satanist, they have a nose for the unnatural, and woe those who are found to consort with the enemy. More than one Hunter cell has been "deactivated" for cutting a deal with the undead, or for employing tools or crafts that defy the natural order.

General Difficulty: 5/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 4, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 9

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee (Sword) 8, Occult 8, Awareness 8

Edges: Sense the Unnatural, Repel the Unnatural, Thwart the Unnatural (Two Perks each)

Notes: The Radical keeps the cell under surveillance until they demonstrate guilt, such as by engaging the supernatural in conversation or using magic (or what appears to magic). The Radical doesn't engage in overt frontal assaults, but sets traps in patience, often using lesser supernatural creatures or even human servants as bait. Society of St. Leopold cleaners will handle any subsequent mess. The Radical's inspiration to purge creation provides them with a number of bonus dice to any test equal to the current Danger level, troublingly similar to a Hunter's own Drive (unless... no, it couldn't be...).

Bad Penny

The Bad Penny is on a mission: To avenge their last crew. And possibly the one before that. They've been working the streets longer than most Hunters have been alive, and they have all kinds of stories to tell. Stories that usually end with the death of everyone except them, despite their best efforts. Now, they want to join the Hunters, to add their considerable experience to the cell. But there's one small thing they'd like help with first....

General Difficulty: 3/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 6, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics (Dodge) 7, Subterfuge 7, Streetwise 7

Edges: One Asset Edge that nobody in the Cell has, with one Perk.

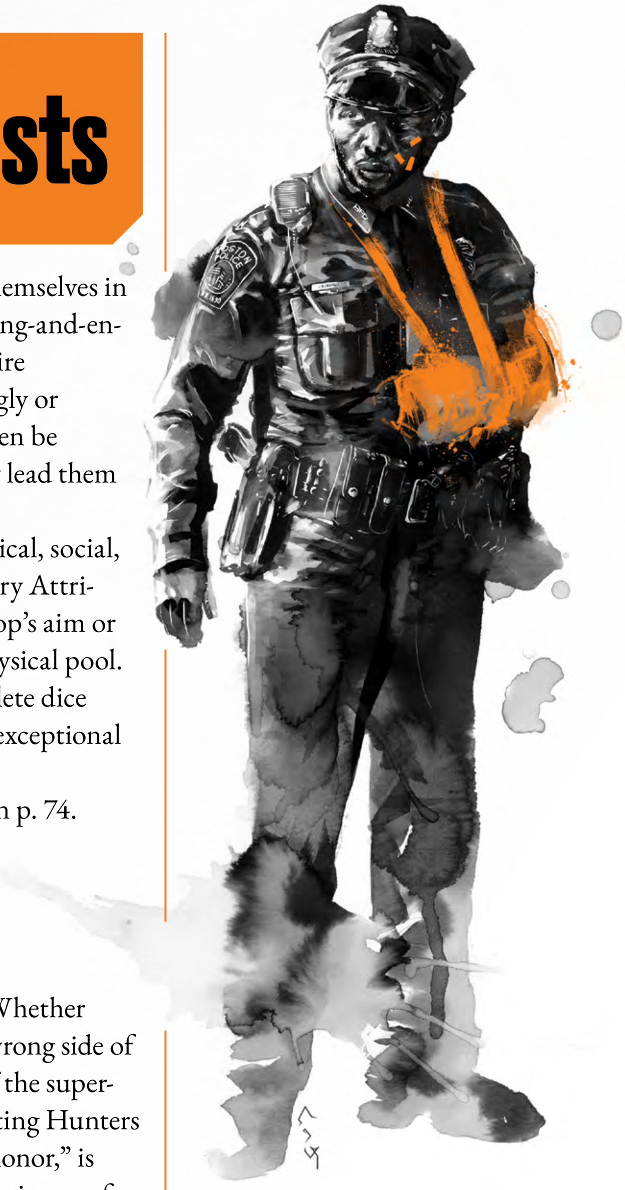
Notes: The Bad Penny has, perhaps inadvertently, caused the death of at least two previous groups to which they belonged. Whether because of their recklessness, ineptitude, or an actual honest-to-god curse, they bring misfortune wherever they go. So long as they stay with the cell, treat the Danger level as one higher.

Other Common Antagonists

Despite being on the side of humanity overall, Hunters often find themselves in opposition to individual "normies," whether they're caught breaking-and-entering by a cop who doesn't exactly believe their protestations of dire monstrous peril, or they run afoul of gangland flunkies working (knowingly or otherwise) for a supernatural master. Indeed, the supernatural may not even be indirectly involved at all, as the vagaries of an individual Hunter's life may lead them into tragically mundane danger.

Minor, human characters and animals have generic dice pools for physical, social, and mental actions. The exception to this rule comes where their Secondary Attributes and profession or role-specific challenges come into play, such as a cop's aim or a corner lookout's perception of danger being higher than their typical physical pool. These exceptions are stated where relevant and should be rolled as a complete dice pool, but in all cases, the Storyteller should adjust dice pools to reflect an exceptional or weaker version of the character specified.

For creating your own mortals, see Supporting Character Templates on p. 74.



Police Detective

Hunters have all-too-frequent encounters with mortal law enforcement. Whether they're in the right of things, Hunters frequently find themselves on the wrong side of the law, especially when the law as a whole makes no acknowledgement of the supernatural (or, worse, is in thrall to it). Police detectives may end up investigating Hunters just as Hunters investigate their quarry, and since, "He's a vampire, your honor," is often inadmissible in court or at the scene of the crime, dealing with police is one of the occupational hazards of the Hunt.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 3, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics 5, Firearms 5, Investigation 6, Streetwise 5

Criminal

Hunters and their quarry often find themselves in the company of villains and rogues, simply due to vagaries of the Hunt and workaday employment. Add to this the occasional need for protection, information, and certain specialists in league with the Underground creed. Criminals cover a broad spectrum, from street drug dealers to to forgers and safecrackers, to the mob boss operating out of a penthouse apartment.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 3, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 5, Firearms 5, Intimidation 5, Larceny 5, Streetwise 7

Clergy

Clergy comprise a varied group, spanning multiple faiths and each posing a danger to the supernatural, and possible allies or enemies to Hunters. At their weakest, they are capable of rallying their congregations in worship, hope, and resilience against supernatural predation. At their strongest, they wield their faith like a weapon, and maybe be the scourges of Unusual Threats themselves.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Academics 6, Insight 7, Occult 5, Leadership 6

Special: Some clergy — and some other humans — possess what amount to Endowments (see p.97) or other manifestations of "True Faith," but certainly not all. Precious few, in fact.

Ghoul

Ghouls form the stock of retainers, servants, and slaves of many vampires. Addicted to the foul blood in their masters' and mistresses' dead veins, ghouls will obey their creators in any way they can, even to the point of injury, and in some cases, death. Ghouls may be stoic butlers, steady bodyguards, or blood-crazed cultists, depending on their "benefactor" and their ways.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 4, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 6, Intimidation 5, Occult 6, Stealth 5

Special: Ghouls often have lesser forms of the powers possessed by their vampiric masters. In most cases, a single, less-potent version of one of the master's powers represents the undead advantage possessed by a ghoul.

Animals

Whether or not they like to admit it, many monsters share a kinship with primal creatures. Many animals rear or shy away in the proximity of the monstrous, though a few are drawn to fellow bestial-types like werewolves or feral supernatural entities. Some vampires use animals for scouting in the city or surprise attacks in the wilderness, and it isn't unknown for a sorcerer to keep a loyal pet as a familiar.

Animals don't inherently act as antagonists, however, and some Hunters rely on them in their fight against the supernatural. A loyal dog can protect a cell's hideout, or even just alert canny Hunters to the presence of intruders. As well, Hunters who take the Beast Whisperer Edge employ trained animal companions. Obviously, this isn't an exhaustive list of animals. It stands on its own, and also provides ample starting points for animals from which the Storyteller might reasonably extrapolate other specific animals.

Bat (Large)

Commonly associated with vampires, perhaps in part due to shapeshifting and animal-commanding archetypes of blood-drinkers, the bat is far from an apex predator, but it benefits hugely from an impressive sonar ability.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 2, Willpower 1

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 7, Stealth 5

Bear

Impressive in strength, lethality, and speed, the bear is also a surprisingly agile creature capable of ripping flesh to ribbons with one single burst of violence.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 3, Intimidation 6

Special: Add +2 to damage done by bear attacks.

Birds of Prey

Though many birds of prey exist, the hawk, eagle, vulture, and owl are among the folkloric companions of certain monsters, whether acting as a sage familiar, eerie omen, or simply present to feast on whatever the monster leaves behind.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 3, Willpower 2

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 6, Brawl 5, Stealth 6

Guard Dog

A man's best friend is his dog, and no few Hunters keep such faithful companions. Unfortunately, many supernatural creatures agree with the sentiment, retaining vicious yet obedient hounds to guard their properties or set loose on intruders.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 2

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 4, Brawl 6, Intimidation 4, Stealth 4

Special: Add +1 to damage done by guard dog bites.

Horse

Horses tend to shy from many supernatural creatures, unless in a rural sorcerer's stable or a vampire's crumbling estate for the purposes of quick, unexpected escape (or as a stock of copious, if unpleasant, blood...).

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 1, Mental 1

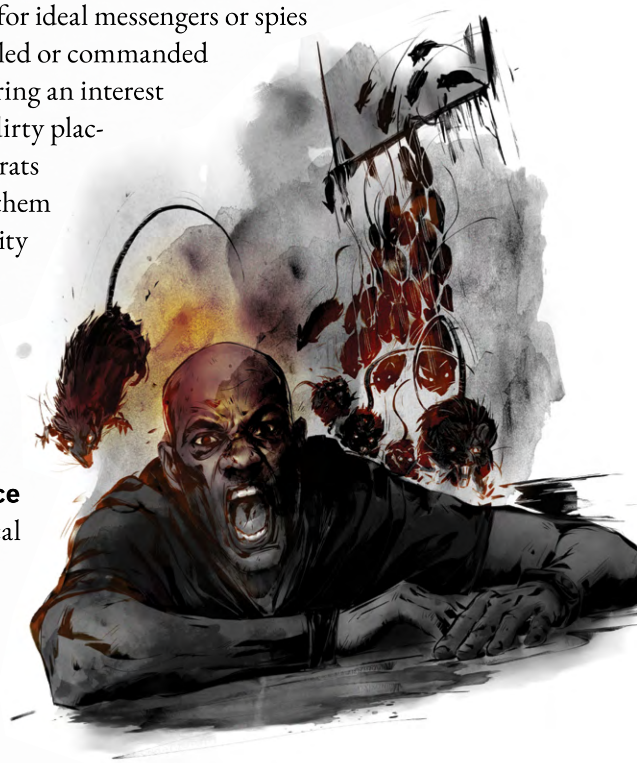
Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 2

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 4

Special: Horses do +2 damage when trampling prone opponents.

Rat

Many monsters' favored creature, the rat, or swarm of rats, make for ideal messengers or spies when compelled or commanded or simply sharing an interest in dank and dirty places. When the rats swarm, treat them as a single entity but add 3 to Health and all physical-based rolls.



Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 1, Willpower 1

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Stealth 7

Wolf

Wolves enjoy a place of keen respect among certain cultures and are feared as symbols of evil among others. Needless to say, this means a wolf might have a place of honor among a trainer Hunter, or it might be a symbol of predatory intent when accompanying a vampire or as the host among which a werewolf travels.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 3, Intimidation 5, Stealth 5

Special: Add +1 to damage done by wolf attacks. ■

Appendix:

ADVICE FOR CONSIDERATE PLAY

The World of Darkness is a strange and dangerous place — for the characters who dwell within it. Players, however, are entitled to the luxury of knowing that they're not going to encounter disrespect or personal abuse at the table. And though the World of Darkness and Hunter: The Reckoning by extension explore mature themes and difficult subject matter, troupes (and Storytellers in particular) need to make sure that those subjects aren't used to belittle others or cause them personal distress.

This appendix provides tools to make sure that everyone at the table can enjoy the horror of the World of Darkness while leaving that horror within the imaginary exercise of storytelling.

Character and Player Identity

One of the best things about tabletop roleplaying is that you can play someone different from yourself. No gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, class, or position in society is off limits. But remember that this freedom comes with a responsibility to your fellow players. When portraying someone not like you, the good choice is to create a complex, nuanced, and respectful portrayal. Incidentally this also makes for a better game. For instance, your table may include people who identify as trans and, whether they plan to transition, they will probably not feel comfortable if you portray the trans experience as a simple preference or a condition to be cured, or if you just assume that all their characters are also trans. Always respect your players' identities and remember that they don't necessarily align with the identities of their characters.

In a Storytelling game, where imagination runs riot and dialogue emerges on the fly in a split second, using the wrong pronoun for a character or player or accidentally dropping an offensive stereotype in a description are understandable mistakes. Still mistakes, but understandable.

Rather than fearing representing different identities — and thus excluding from your game, for instance, the trans experience or the experience of growing up as an Arab kid in Northern Europe — play with sexuality, gender, nationality, and so on. Who knows? You might even discover aspects of yourself you never considered. If you need help making your portrayal respectful and true to life, ask someone who belongs to the group you are portraying for tips and insights.

Fascism and Authoritarianism in Play

Hunter: The Reckoning is not a fascist-friendly game. If you're a neo-Nazi, alt-righter, or whatever you're calling yourself nowadays, we urge you to put this book down and call someone you trust to talk about where you went so wrong in your life.

The World of Darkness hides innumerable monsters, and some of them are human. Part of the design of **Hunter** is that the orgs — groups of hunters, but not necessarily of like mind — are entities that seek control, wanting to remake the world with their own definition of correctness, heedless of whom they have to harm to do it. Sure, they're hunting monsters, but to what end? Large parts of org society (especially the Government, Corporate, and many Religious orgs) adhere to cults of tradition, ascribe to the idea of disempowering their enemies with overwhelming wealth and force, and praise religious fundamentalism or even pre-modern ideals like feudal rule. Some organizations have their roots in historical societies or factions that are bound to have opinions on what's going on in the world right now. Even so, it's pretty easy to steer the game away from totalitarian perspectives. Emphasize the differences between individual Hunters, and between factions as well as inside factions.

Tell stories about infighting, surprising kindness, and new ideas. The whole reason players take on the role of capital-H Hunters, inspired by genuine Drives, is that they're not necessarily looking to prop up an autocrat or punish people who are different from themselves. The game systems themselves demonstrate the risks of going too far. Indeed, "the Hunter who went too far" is its own cautionary tale for active cells. What's the sense in being a Hunter if you want to make the world awful for others?

What if someone wants to play a fascist, though, or a Storyteller wants to introduce a fascist character? There are plenty of those throughout the World of Darkness — monsters, but many with pretty faces. They can be a tragic villain, or a former friend who fell, or even someone who the cell thinks of as an ally. They might be the sorcerous neo-Nazi, the neofeudalist vampire billionaire, or the werewolf obsessed with "lesser breeds." Whatever face they present, the players' characters should be given the satisfaction of redeeming or destroying them eventually. After all, the Hunters are something unique and special, fighting to liberate their fellow humans from predation and injustice — something fascists cannot abide.

Remember: Playing a character whose opinions you oppose can be a great way to understand how supremacist ideas work and how to spot and fight them in the real world. Fictionally experiencing slippery-slope perspectives like blaming the Other, conforming to norms and fighting for a grand purpose, can help you spot these tendencies in yourself and others and diminish their power over you.

This is all in character, of course. At the time of writing, the real world is currently inundated with far-right fascist ideologies being given free reign by well-meaning people who want to preserve civility. If you see people at your table opening up with alt-right talking points, we encourage you to shut that shit down. If you become uncomfortable with a storyline in a game because of what's happening out of game, use one of the techniques listed here. You are not obligated to tolerate fascists. This game is a way to tell stories about understanding and perhaps fixing some of the darkness in our own world. Use that to your advantage.

Sexual Violence in Games

Let's not mince words here — monsters such as vampires, since John Polidori's story *The Vampyre* was published in 1819, have been used as a metaphor for human predation. They seduce, beguile, coerce, dominate, and sometimes outright force humans to perform their will. After all, they are apex predators and it is their right. Vampires who embrace this perspective ignore or outright laugh at consent. And it's not just vampires. Sorcerers suborn our own will and discernment. Werewolves represent peoples' bestial side and carnal lusts. The mysterious fae deceive us and turn our urges against us.

Consent in this case can be nonsexual, but the nature of what monsters represent can absolutely carry with it an aura of sex, especially in a world that speaks to the material and the sensual. Polidori's original vampire was a sexual predator who drank the blood of virgins on their wedding nights. While your **Hunter: The Reckoning** game could strive to avoid sexual content at all costs, it's important to be aware of the potential for sexual violence as a theme.

Some scenes of supernatural predation can resemble sexual assault, from a vampiric feeding to a warlock's "virgin sacrifice." Exploration into the depths of the human psyche can be intense and worthwhile, but only with the enthusiastic buy-in of your table. If your group wants to avoid the whole "monster as sexual predator" theme, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. The game is designed to allow players to fight against the worst in their nature instead of just giving in to it.

Consequence Systems

Hunter: The Reckoning includes a number of systems that represent a variety of action-and-consequences systems, the better to model the difficulty of being a Hunter in a world that wants to pretend monsters don't exist. Hunter is expressly not set up as a zombie horde-mode exercise or a monster-of-the-week television serial. There's nothing wrong with those, but one of the most defining characteristics of the World of Darkness is consequences for one's actions. The Hunters may overcome the quarry now, but at what cost? Eventually, Hunters will fail in their own code, or they'll take an action that affects how others see them. (Probably both….) That's a good thing. That creates conflicts from which additional stories emerge.

Chronicle Tenets

None of the examples of Chronicle Tenets (see p. 132) in Hunter allow characters to use and abuse humans. Even the hard-boiled "Street Code" example on p. 133 includes the tenet "Respect others, and demand respect." Removing someone's consent is never respectful.

This is intentional. Hunter becomes a stronger game if you choose a set of chronicle Tenets that everyone around the table can agree with.

Touchstones

Touchstones are a way to represent the people who are important to a Hunter. They're the people a Hunter prizes above all, a reason for the Hunt as well as justification for the things one does on the Hunt.

They can also be used to model questionable outlooks, especially when contrasted with the players' Hunters' own motivations, whether in terms of Ambition, Desire, or Drive. "I would do anything to protect the people I love" is a far cry from "I would do anything to protect my national identity," even though only a few key words change.

Allow for self-reflection. As a Hunter's relationships with their Touchstones come into question, they should have the opportunity to look back and see what they have done. Part of the narrative of **Hunter: The Reckoning** is the accountability for one's actions, and player characters should be faced with the consequences of what they have done and opportunities to make full and genuine restitution to those they've harmed. If they don't take those opportunities, the consequences will accumulate. Nothing says a Touchstone is forever, and the predations of the supernatural are hardly the only way to lose Touchstones.

Remember, though, that people are more important than the game. If you or another player start feeling uncomfortable out of character, use one of the tools detailed in this Appendix to stop and check in to see if everyone is doing okay. Fellow players will thank you for it. **Hunter** is a game and it's meant to have horrible moments and create fun, thought-provoking outcomes. It's not supposed to be Horrible Relationship Simulator.

Calibration Techniques

Lines and Veils

A classic technique originally described by Ron Edwards in his book *Sex and Sorcery*, Lines and Veils allows players to pick and choose what they want to address in the chronicle. Before the chronicle begins, the Storyteller should prepare two sheets of paper. Label one "Lines" and the other "Veils." Lines are things that will absolutely not be touched on in the course of play, not even mentioned in passing. Veils are things that can happen, but will not be played out, and instead addressed with a "fade to black" (see below). The Storyteller asks players what they'd like added to the lists, and notes that the lists can be edited at any time. Veils can be moved to Lines, Lines can be moved to Veils, new Veils or Lines can be added, or Veils or Lines can be taken away (with the consent of the other players). Veils and Lines cannot be used to cut out antagonists (i.e., "I don't want monsters to be a part of this game at all, not even mentioned in passing") but can be used to restrict antagonists' actions that might be uncomfortable for some players (i.e.; "I do not want to explore sexual violence or the ramifications thereof in this game at all," which would cut out some types of events and thematic elements such as certain vampiric feeding scenes, though they are still present in the context of the greater World of Darkness).

Common Lines: sexual violence, explicit depiction of torture, force feeding, starvation, mutilation, racial slurs, gender-specific slurs, spiders, needles, bestiality, explicit depiction of bodily functions, animal suffering

Common Veils: explicit depiction of consensual sexual activity, torture, emotional abuse, physical abuse, body horror, human experimentation, dream or nightmare sequences, childhood memories, prophetic visions, animal death

Fade to Black

In a movie, when the hero is just about to get into bed with her love interest or be "forcibly interrogated," sometimes the camera cuts away right before the action — occasionally with a moan or a scream included as appropriate. This technique is called "fade to black," and it can be used as appropriate in your chronicle. If you don't want to narrate every caress of a love scene or the blood gushing out of a corpse the werewolf is hunching over, simply fade to black and focus on another scene. A player can also request a fade to black if they are uncomfortable with what is happening at the table.

The Stoplight System

This was pioneered by the group Games to Gather. The Storyteller lays out three different colored circles on the table: red, yellow, and green. Each color indicates a response to different levels of intensity. Green means, "Yes, I am okay with and encourage the scene getting more intense." Yellow means, "The scene is fine at the intensity level it is now, and I would like it to stay here if possible." Red means, "The scene is too intense for me in a bad way and I need it to decrease or I need to tap out." Players can tap the colored circles as appropriate to indicate to the Storyteller what they want or need at that moment.

The Storyteller can also use the stoplight system to ask the players if they'd like intensity increased or decreased as necessary without breaking the narrative flow. To do so, the Storyteller can repeatedly tap a color — green for "more intense," yellow for "keep it here," and red for, "Do you need me to stop?" The players can then touch a color in response. Players can also respond by saying the color in question out loud, or each player can have their own set of red-yellow-green cards and display theirs as appropriate.

The X Card

The X card was designed by John Stavropolous and is fairly self-explanatory: A card or sheet of paper with an "X" drawn on it is placed in the middle of the table. At any point, a player or the Storyteller may touch the X card to call a halt to any action currently making them uncomfortable in a bad way. If they would like to explain themselves, they may, but it absolutely isn't necessary, and the Storyteller should resume play once everyone is settled back in.

The OK Check-In

The OK Check-in is a live-action roleplaying technique that uses quick hand signals and no paper or props. When a player or Storyteller feels the intensity of a scene rising and wants to check in on another player, they simply flash an OK symbol with their fingers. The person being checked in with gives either a thumbs-up (good, continue), thumbs-down (bad, stop), or a hand-wiggle (so-so, unsure). Anything other than a thumbs-up stops play, so that the responder can take a moment to breathe.

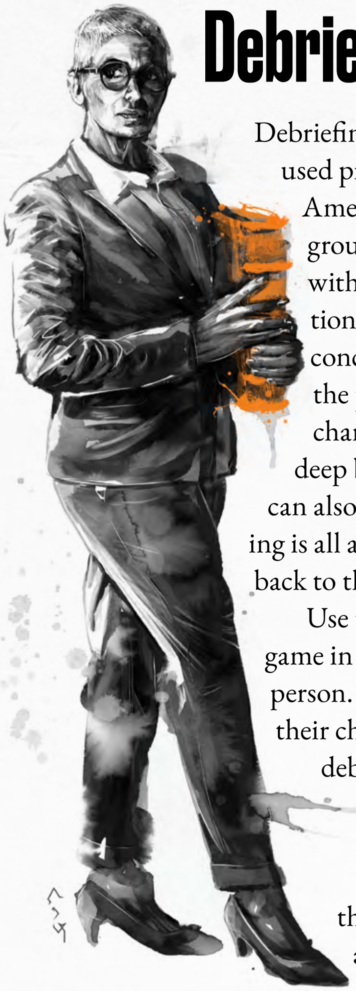
The Door Is Always Open

This is another technique that needs very little explanation. If a player needs to stop play for any reason, they are free to do so after giving the Storyteller a heads-up. The session is then on pause until that player either returns or leaves the premises.

Some good reasons to leave a session early could be:

- Your Storyteller or other players deliberately ignore the techniques you all agreed to use
- You are having a family or other emergency
- You feel ill or panicky
- You are uncomfortable and have addressed that with others at the table
- Your Storyteller or other players are using out-of-game (or in-game that you're not comfortable with) name calling, threats, or extended arguments to force you into situations you don't want to be in
- You have a prior engagement or need to leave early
- You don't feel this is the experience you signed up for

Remember that you as a Storyteller also always have the ability to stop the session. Being a Storyteller is a lot of emotional labor, often uncompensated, and if the group you're playing with refuses to acknowledge that, it may be better to take a break or stop running for that group entirely.



Debriefing

Debriefing is a post-game technique, used primarily by European and American freeform LARP groups, and it can be used along with any and all of the suggestions above. After the session concludes, the Storyteller asks the players to put away their character sheets and take some deep breaths. Soft music or snacks can also assist in debriefing. Debriefing is all about bringing the players back to the real world.

Use this time to talk about the game in a context other than first person. Players tend to refer to their characters as "I." During the debriefing the Storyteller should encourage them to use the character's names and use first person only for things that they felt as players, not as characters. What did they think was the highlight of the session? What was their favorite interaction they had with another player's character? A Storyteller character? Is there anything the players think the Storyteller could be doing better? Are the techniques and story-building suggestions in this book working out for everyone at the table? Should anything be changed to make the game more engaging for everyone involved? These are all questions that can be asked during debriefing, though they're not necessary. If other, more important topics need to be covered, feel free to use debriefing time to cover those as well. Respect if some players don't want to take part in debriefings. Like all other techniques in this Appendix, it's meant to make the game more engaging, not force players to do things they're uncomfortable with.

Debriefing doesn't need to last for a set amount of time (as a rule of thumb, five minutes per player is usually enough). However, after a particularly intense session, it's probably a good idea to have a longer debriefing period than normal.

Further Reading:

- "Sexual Assault Myths" on the Minnesota State University website: https://www.mnsu.edu/varp/assault/myths.html
- "What do the terms Lines and Veils mean?" on RPGStackExchange: https://rpg.stackexchange.com/questions/30906/what-do-the-terms-lines-and-veils-mean
- *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt
- "Let's Play with Fire! Using Risk and Its Power for Personal Transformation" by Bettina Beck: https://nordiclarp.org/2018/03/01/lets-play-fire-using-risk-power-personal-transformation/
- "Creating a Culture of Trust Through Safety and Calibration Mechanics" by Maury Brown: https://nordiclarp.org/2016/09/09/creating-culture-trust-safety-calibration-larp-mechanics/
- "Ur-Fascism" by Umberto Eco: https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/
- *Sex and Sorcery* by Ron Edwards
- *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* by Judith Herman
- *The Vampyr* by John Polidori
- "The X Card" by John Stavropolous: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SB0jsx34bWHZWbnNIVVuMjhDkrdFGo1_hSC2BWPlI3A ■

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HUNTER
THE RECKONING

CHARACTER SHEET

Name.................... **Concept**.................... **Creed**....................

Cell.................... **Ambition**.................... **Desire**....................

Drive.................... **Redemption**....................

ATTRIBUTES

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	○○○○○	Charisma	○○○○○	Intelligence	○○○○○
Dexterity	○○○○○	Manipulation	○○○○○	Wits	○○○○○
Stamina	○○○○○	Composure	○○○○○	Resolve	○○○○○

Health	Willpower	Despair
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐	☐

SKILLS

Athletics	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Awareness	○○○○○
Craft	○○○○○	Insight	○○○○○	Finance	○○○○○
Driving	○○○○○	Intimidation	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Melee	○○○○○	Persuasion	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Stealth	○○○○○	Streetwise	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○
Survival	○○○○○	Subterfuge	○○○○○	Technology	○○○○○

EDGES AND PERKS

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HUNTER
THE RECKONING

Name

Total Experience

Spent Experience

Chronicle Tenets

Touchstones

Creed Fields

Advantages & Flaws

	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
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	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Notes

Equipment

Age

Date of birth

Appearance

Distinguishing features

History

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ORPHEUS
GROUP